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The free feeding of school
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THE FREE FEEDING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

A REPRINT OF THE REPORTS

BY

THE SPECIAL SANITARY COMMISSIONER
OF *THE LANCET*

ON THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE MUNICIPALITIES WITH
REGARD TO THE PROVISION OF MEALS FOR
THE CHILDREN ATTENDING THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF

PARIS, BRUSSELS, MILAN, VERCELLI,
SAN REMO, MENTONE, NICE,
CANNES, TOULON, AND MARSEILLES

THE OFFICES OF *THE LANCET*

423 AND 424, STRAND, AND 1 AND 2, BEDFORD STREET, LONDON, W.C.

PRICE THREEPENCE NET.

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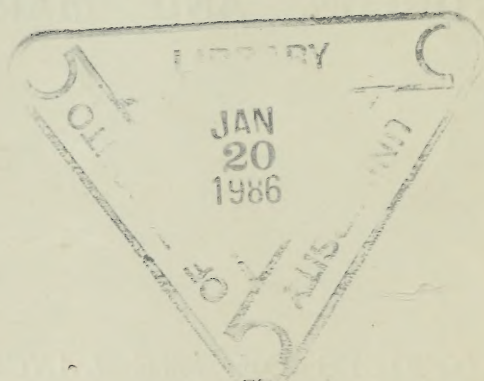
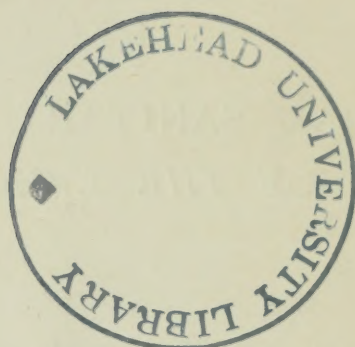
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INTRODUCTION.

ASSUREDLY there should be no difference of opinion as to the necessity of feeding school children. To send insufficiently fed children to school is to undermine the vitality of the race and to compromise the strength and prosperity of the empire. The children of other countries are very carefully and elaborately educated, and much public money is spent here so that the children of this country may acquire equal competency. This, however, is impossible with those children who, lacking food, do not possess the physical capacity to profit by the lessons which they receive. Therefore the money spent on their education is to a large extent wasted. But the evil does not end here. Starved in mind and body, these children are only too likely to become the wastrels who fill our workhouses, asylums, and prisons. They then cost the nation more money than would have sufficed to feed them properly during their childhood. From the purely physical and medical point of view the truest economy is the thorough care of childhood. It is in early years that the tendency to various forms of disease and physical weakness may best be arrested. It may also be argued that those evil propensities which lead to dishonesty and crime are best checked during childhood.

Thus one and all will agree that the children must be fed. But how is it to be done? Theoretically, there appeared to be a general all-round tendency to differ on the question, and as a few facts are worth a good deal of theory it seemed wiser not to theorise at all, but simply to relate what has been done. For this purpose it was necessary to go abroad, since in England nothing has been done. In England, as abroad, there were, of course, private charities at work; but if these had sufficed the question of physical degeneration and the demand for legislative interference would not have arisen. Therefore the present inquiry has reference to what public bodies have done either to supplement the insufficient efforts of private charities, or, as is the case, for instance, at Paris and at Vercelli, to replace them entirely by a public service. In selecting places for such an enquiry, an endeavour was made to discover conditions that varied

as much as possible. Thus at Mentone the authorities have only just awakened to the fact that they are expected to act in the matter, so they have decided that all new schools shall be provided with kitchens and the means to feed the children. On the other hand, at Paris the authorities have been feeding the children at the public expense for more than twenty-three years. At Cannes a short time ago it was the school teachers themselves who attempted to give a few meals, obtaining but trifling aid from the municipality. For those who find there is virtue in the policy of drift, and who shrink from logical, systematic action, the experience of Nice should prove attractive. Here the best known systems are simultaneously applied, resulting in a most contradictory, illogical jumble. On the other hand at Vercelli there is no vacillation. There it is held that what is good for one is good for all. Children are, it is thought, better at school than running home for their meals and getting into mischief in the streets. So rich and poor alike must partake of the midday meal provided at the public expense.

Particulars will also be found in the following pages regarding the administrative details, the actual cost of the meals, the style of dishes prepared, the way in which they are cooked, and the lessons thus given in good taste, in skill, and in painstaking, by which artistic and refined meals of three courses can be provided for about three-halfpence each.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the object of this series of articles has been simply to provide facts and to describe the practical experience acquired in different places.

THE FREE FEEDING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

PARIS. FIRST REPORT.

Physical Degeneration and Starving School Children.—Dangerous National Inferiority.—Early Voluntary Efforts.—History and Origin of the Caisses Scolaires or School Funds. Their Three Functions: 1. The Distribution of Clothes; 2. The Organisation of School Excursions and School Colonies; 3. The Management of the School Canteens.—Annual Municipal Subvention for these Purposes £80,890.—Gratuitous Feeding on a large scale commenced in 1884.—Ultimate Abolition of all Patronage, of all Charity, and of Church Interference.—A Meal of Three Courses for 1½d.—The Careful Protection of the Child's Dignity.—Good Manners, Cleanliness, and Skilful Cooking.—Delicate and Artistic Flavouring.—The Free Meal as a Lesson in Refinement.

THE supposed physical degeneration of the race has been the subject of so many sensational dissertations that public interest is now fully aroused and the nation is anxious to deal with the matter. It may be, as some very good authorities contend, that with a falling death-rate and a longer average duration of life it cannot be maintained that the race as a whole is losing its strength and vitality. On the other hand, no one has attempted to deny that there is physical degeneration among certain sections or classes of the community. Such degeneration must occur notably among those who in their infancy and childhood have been insufficiently or injudiciously fed. As, further, the law renders education obligatory, we have in the primary schools a machinery all ready made and at hand permitting full investigation into the facts of the case. There are here also the means of remedying the evil wherever it shall have been proved to exist. Whatever political economists and others may say, no medical man would maintain that it is possible to educate an underfed child without grave risk to his or her health. From the physical point of view there can be no question but that the child must be fed first and educated afterwards. Nevertheless, it has been asserted over and over again that in London alone there are daily some 50,000 children who

go to school without breakfast.* Whatever the basis of this assertion and even if exaggerated there is not the slightest doubt that many of the children who attend the primary schools are often injudiciously fed, sometimes insufficiently fed, and on some days not fed at all. To attempt to teach children thus suffering is to waste public money as well as to injure the child pupils. It is certainly a means of producing physical degeneration. By law and by taxation schools and teachers are provided and yet food is more necessary than either school or teacher. This, of course, will be admitted by everybody. Only it will be said that parents ought to feed their own children. It is, however, the obvious fact that some parents either cannot or will not feed their children and this accounts for much of the physical degeneration. Nevertheless, years have rolled by and nothing has been done of a systematic character. Here and there charitably inclined people have organised soup kitchens in connexion with schools in very poor quarters, but these are sporadic local efforts and are not to be relied upon. Also it is not charity, with its pauperising and degrading influence, that is needed, but a national scheme by which, in some way or other, every child shall receive, without imposing any humiliating condition, all that is necessary for its physical as well as its intellectual development. How this is to be done and who is to pay the cost are problems that will not be easily settled. But it can be done, it has been done, and what has been achieved in other countries will probably be attempted here. In any case, if a foreign nation feeds all its children adequately and if all are not fed in England then, in time, we shall stand at a disadvantage when compared with that foreign nation. Now, the nation in question is our nearest neighbour, France. Surely it behoves us to know what has been done so near at hand and to see if this example may not serve as an object lesson.

It was from the school fund (*caisse des écoles*) that the school canteens (*cantines scolaires*) gradually merged into existence. In the latter days of the Second Empire a law on primary instruction was

* In the Blue Book report on Physical Deterioration, page 66, H.M. Inspector of Schools, Dr. Eichholz, deals with the question of underfeeding. Speaking of the Johanna-street Board School, Lambeth, as a type of a bad district school, he said he considered that ninety per cent. of the children "are unable, by reason of their physical condition, to attend to their work in a proper way, while thirty-three per cent. during six months of the year, from October to March, require feeding." At first Dr. Eichholz estimated that the voluntary feeding in London schools dealt with some 60,000 children, but he had subsequently gone into the question in a more detailed manner. As a result of this more extensive investigation Dr. Eichholz testified that, in his opinion, the approximative number of children who required feeding was 122,000. This represents sixteen per cent. of the children frequenting the elementary schools of London. *The Times* of March 9th, 1907, in describing a meeting on Physical Education held at Londonderry House, Park-lane, reports that Sir Lauder Brunton, in the course of an address, said "that, in spite of all the charitable organisations and benevolent institutions in the country, they found that infants were dying in millions, children were starved by thousands, they became weak, they were growing up burdens to themselves and useless to others, and instead of being a strength to the country they weakened it."

enacted which bears the date of April 10th, 1867. Article 15 of this law is thus worded :—

A deliberation of the municipal council approved by the prefect may create in all communes a school fund for the purpose of encouraging school attendance by giving rewards to the most assiduous pupils and help to indigent pupils. The revenues of the school fund will consist of voluntary subscriptions of subventions given by the commune, by the department, or by the State. With the authorisation of the prefect it may receive gifts and legacies. Several communes may be authorised to join together for the formation and management of such a fund. The service of collecting for the fund is rendered gratuitously.

M. Duruy, at that time Minister of Public Instruction, issued a circular on May 12th, 1867, explaining this law. He said it was best to leave to the inhabitants the care of taking the initiative in the creation of such funds and drew attention to a fund already in existence in the Second Arrondissement of Paris. This fund had been established by the National Guard in 1849, under the Second Republic. The circular also calls attention to the fact that such funds are in existence in Switzerland where, "in accordance with a touching custom, newly married couples on their wedding day hand over to the school fund a sort of offering to childhood." The above law, however, can only be qualified as the promulgation of an idea and the approval of a scheme; it did not enforce its application. Three years later the Franco-German war broke out and it was only three years after the war that the nation had sufficiently recovered from its disasters to think of these proposed reforms. Early in 1874 a school fund was created at Montmartre, a district which has some 200,000 inhabitants, and in other localities. This was done in harmony with the stipulation of the law of April 10th, 1867, but already in the minds of the more ardent friends of education the scope of the law was enlarged. Thus the school fund of the Montmartre district so far back as 1874 issued a pamphlet in which the following passage occurs :—

To-day all who are earnestly devoted to their country recognise the necessity of developing education in France. 35 gratuitous schools exist in the XVIII. Arrondissement. Learned and devoted teachers there impart primary instruction to nearly 12,000 children, but in spite of their skill and zeal much still remains to be done. It is necessary to encourage both masters and pupils. Facilities must be provided so that poor children may frequent the schools and, therefore, they must be given, when the weather is very rigorous, some shoes and warm clothing, and finally they should be encouraged to prolong their studies which are too often abandoned after the first communion. The school fund is created so as to provide for all these necessities.

Thus, from the very beginning the idea germinated of giving material help in regard to physical requirements. Very little, it is true, was done at first. The distribution of strong thick boots is one of the first items on record. Then there is also an account remaining of outfits provided for some young girls who had so distinguished themselves as to be admitted to the Ecole Normale, or training school for teachers, but were too poor to dress themselves well enough to go to such an institution. These and many other voluntary efforts made in different parts of France, though altogether insufficient, had

a double advantage. They created the nucleus of future administrative bodies and prepared or ripened public opinion so that it was ultimately possible to convert into an obligation that which had formerly been but a voluntary effort. This final step was brought about by the law of March 28th, 1882, on compulsory education. Article XVII. of this law enacts that

The school fund instituted by Article XV. of the Law of April 10th, 1867, shall be established in all the communes.

Thus every district is now compelled to institute a school fund and soon there followed a great change in the policy or the purport of these school funds. Originally they were intended to aid the cause of education by urging children to attend school and by giving them prizes when they distinguished themselves. Now the law compels everyone to go to school and also provides efficient teaching. Therefore the school fund administration need not attend any longer to such matters but find ample occupation in seeing to the physical requirements of the pupils. The police compel the children to go to school and the State, by the appointment of teachers, attends to their education. To the school fund remains the questions of food, of clothing, and of health-restoring holidays. All these are matters of great complexity and necessitated many tentative experiments before anything like a satisfactory system of feeding the children was established. In regard to clothing and to sending unhealthy or debilitated children to the country it may still be urged that more might with advantage be attempted. But if in this there remains room for further improvement it may now be said with confidence that in Paris and in most other places every child attending school receives a wholesome and a sufficient meal. Personally I can only speak of what I have seen in Paris, but the law applies equally to the whole of France though the success of its application must depend to a large extent on the devotion or intelligence of each local school fund committee of control.

That the question of health predominated in the management of these funds is shown by the preference very generally given to school colonies over school excursions, where there was not money enough for both. By school excursion is meant an expedition of one or more days into the country. The teachers, in accompanying the pupils, give such explanations of what is seen as to constitute object lessons. This is at once a pleasant change and a useful means of education. But it is generally considered far more beneficent and useful to select a certain number of sickly and debilitated children and to send them for several weeks to some bracing country place where their health may be thoroughly restored. This is called a school colony and constitutes a great and happy feature of the educational machinery. Thus, for instance, the Montmartre School Fund has purchased a magnificent mansion and its surrounding park at Luzancy, not many miles from Paris. There four batches of 186 children spend several joyful weeks during the course of the summer, living nearly all the time in the open air. The school fund of the

neighbouring district, the XVII. Arrondissement, sent last year 137 children to the seaside at Fécamp and 281 to the country at Monthéry, making in all 418 children who spent a total of 8500 days right away from the big town, enjoying wholesome recreation in the fields or on the seashore. What this means in health and happiness to these poor children cannot be expressed by mere statistics; it is best left to the imagination. To help to defray the cost of these school colonies and the canteens the municipality has voted an annual subvention of £80,800 divided between the 20 school funds of the 20 Paris districts, or *arrondissements*, in proportion to the number of poor in each locality.

As a rule, each school fund has three committees—one for the school canteens, one for the provision of shoes and clothing, and the third attends to the holiday excursions and holiday colonies. The general committee from which these subcommittees are chosen generally consists of the mayor, the members of the municipal council, and the government school inspector of the district. Then the voluntary subscribers to the fund elect out of their own ranks and by a ballot vote probably 20 or 24 committee men. Thus the local authority and the local subscribers are both represented and share in common the task and responsibility involved. Early in the day it was found expedient to obtain the assistance of ladies. At first many of them were connected with church charities and were called lady patronesses. But this did not work at all. No one wanted to be patronised, and the main object of education as at present organised being to inculcate the sense of the duties and of the dignity of the citizen any idea of charity is absolutely antagonistic to the whole spirit of modern educational reform. The lady patronesses were no longer allowed to interfere and in their stead lady delegates were appointed. Their mission is not to patronise but to see that the rules are applied and that everyone obtains his rights. These ladies have a card bearing the stamp and signature of the mayor and also sometimes wear a ribbon favour of the colours of the town. The lady delegates to the canteens must visit the schools under their charge at least once a week. They inscribe the accounts on the printed formulas and see that all is absolutely clean and that the meals are well prepared. In this respect the ladies have rendered great service, for it is due to their special knowledge and skill that the cost of the meals has been considerably reduced.

It was in May, 1877, that the Prefect of the Seine informed the various school funds of Paris that the municipal council had determined to study how a good, wholesome, warm meal might be given to all the children once a day. The answers at first obtained were not encouraging. The school funds had not the means either in regard to management or in regard to their financial resources to attempt so vast an enterprise. It was also estimated that such meals would cost on an average 25 centimes ($2\frac{1}{2}d.$) each. For the moment the matter dropped. But in February, 1881, the question was raised whether all the children who were attending school and whose parents were in receipt of poor relief might not be given a meal while at school. The

school fund of the Montmartre district at once volunteered to undertake this service. Other districts followed the example. The municipality voted funds in aid, and a report presented for the year 1884-85 showed that during the year 15 canteens had served 1,110,827 portions; one-third of these were helpings of soup, another third meat, and the rest vegetables. The children had paid 36,776 francs 90 centimes for 736,526 of these helpings; while 374,301 helpings had been given without payment. The total cost was 59,264 francs 95 centimes. The portion of meat then given weighed from 15 to 20 grammes and cost the school funds 0·0578 franc. But soon and with better organised surveillance and management the portion was increased to 20 or 25 grammes and the cost was lowered to 0·045 franc.

The system of feeding the children was thus fairly launched. It has now become universal and experience has taught that the cost need not be more than 15 centimes or $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ per meal of soup, meat, and vegetable. The latter naturally is a separate course, a substantial dish, properly cooked, not a little greenstuff boiled in water as we too often see in England. The principle now adopted is to encourage all the children, whether poor or not, to eat their meals together. A child may bring his own food with him from home but it is never so cheap and is always cold and rarely so good as the meal provided by the canteen. Therefore both children and parents prefer the canteen dinner, but the children who are not content with water bring their own wine or beer in bottles. Even the poorest children generally manage to mix a little wine with their water, particularly now that recent legislation in favour of hygienic drinks has reduced the retail cost of wine to $2d.$ per bottle and even less. From the very first the greatest care has been taken not to allow any loss of dignity to arise from the free feeding. The fundamental principle of the whole management is the absolute innocence of the children. They cannot be expected to pay. Their parents may be at fault; if so, there is only the greater reason to shelter the children and to try to preserve in them that sense of self-respect which might so easily be wrecked by their parents' bad conduct. Each child is called upon to pay $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ per day for his meal and receives in exchange a check or ticket. Sometimes this payment is effected in a small office, one child entering at a time. All receive a ticket for their dinner and only the person who gives the ticket knows who have paid and who have not. The parents of those who do not pay are visited. A full inquiry is made as to their condition and if they are poor they are put on the free list.

Of course it is easy to see that such a system might lead to much abuse. If the father is at work and has only one or two children the gratuity is refused. It is never refused to widows or workers with large families. To this I objected that the father, though earning high wages, might squander them in dissipation and starve his family. Was it not encouraging vice to feed his children? Or, again, others were clever in shamming poverty and to feed their children encouraged their hypocrisy and their lying propensities. All these and many other objections

were met with the one simple, all dominating reply: "The children must be fed." There were methods of investigation; pressure was brought to bear on the parents. The parents or guardians of every child fed gratuitously were called upon and full investigations were made. Friends and witnesses and their employers were also seen when necessary. There was no objection to the show of some severity towards unworthy parents but the child was held sacred. In no case was the child to be humiliated or troubled in any way and on no pretext whatsoever should the food he needed be refused. Besides, there were various categories of gratuity. Persons who could not afford the $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ saved their dignity by paying a $1d.$ or only a $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per day. Nevertheless, in the poor quarters it is in the majority of cases of no use insisting on payment. The children arrive at 8.30 A.M. However poor their parents they generally have had something to eat before starting. Nevertheless there are some extreme cases of poverty, and then a piece of bread is given at the school when the starving child arrives. But this is altogether exceptional. It is at 11.30 A.M. that the mid-day warm meal is given. The children leave school at 4 P.M. and then they are supposed to dine with their parents in the evening. But to many of them it is the mid-day French breakfast that they get at school which constitutes their only satisfactory meal. A few children, however, cannot go home at 4 P.M. as their parents are out working. These are allowed to remain on the school premises till 7 P.M. where they play and prepare their lessons. Then they are given what is called a *goûté*, a sort of "snack," a little bread and butter or jam. Such is the full scope of the feeding undertaken by the school funds though all that is outside the 15 centimes mid-day meal is exceptional. How far the feeding is gratuitous varies according to the district. At the Eppinette district only 20 per cent. of the children pay for their meals. At Batignolles the proportion is 40 per cent. and in the wealthiest quarters of Paris as many as from 60 to 70 per cent. of the school children pay for their mid-day repast. The school funds, in so far as they depend on voluntary contributions, could not feed all these children and during the last three years the Paris municipal council has given to the various school funds of the capital subventions amounting to £40,800 to pay for the free meals.

Such is the general principle on which the system works. Each locality manages its own affairs and is assisted by subventions from the centre and there is emulation between the various funds. It is now only necessary to add a few words as to the canteens themselves. They are object lessons in cleanliness and in simple but refined cooking. The meat is weighed after it has been cooked, the bone and fat being removed; then the younger children get 20 grammes and the older children 30 grammes of cooked meat. The *menu* is, generally speaking, somewhat as follows. Three days a week there is *buillon gras*, a delicacy unknown in England, as no ordinary English person will take the trouble to put the proper proportion of flavouring herbs and vegetables to the beef. Only twice a week is the boiled beef with which the soup has been made given for the second course. As this meat is lighter than roast meat care is taken to supply for the third

course the most substantial vegetables—namely, lentils or haricot beans. What a difference it would make if in England the people knew how to cook these highly nutritious vegetables. At one of the canteens I watched and inquired as to the process. First some onions are fried in good grease, in preference the melted fat of pork or veal. Then some thyme and some laurel leaves are added with “just a suspicion” of garlic. The haricot beans or lentils that have been soaking in water all night are placed over this savoury sauce. Its fat counteracts their dryness and the aroma of the herbs, onions, and garlic confers an appetising flavour. On three days a week roast beef, pork, veal, or mutton is given, preceded by a tasty vegetable soup and followed by a dish of mashed potatoes, or of maccaroni cheese, or of rice and milk, all well flavoured, well cooked, and of excellent quality. Such is the three-halfpenny meal of three courses provided alike to the poor and the well-to-do children attending the primary schools of Paris. But this is not all. The medical officers who examine the children may prescribe larger portions where necessary and quite a number of weakly children have cod-liver oil given to them in winter and syrup of iodide of iron or phosphate of lime in summer.

If the cooking is refined some attempt is also made to refine the manners of the children. So as not to dirty their clothes they are taught to use serviettes, and, generally speaking, the masters or mistresses pay their $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ and take their midday meal with the children, eating exactly the same thing. This example gives confidence and does much good. It is also a very effective way of controlling the cooking. Thus we have the hopeful spectacle of what in England would be pauper children sitting side by side with other children who are in much better circumstances and eating simple but refined food at the same table as gentlemen or lady teachers who have won their university degrees. Then, so that the poorer children should not be looked down upon, care is taken not only to conceal the fact that they are unable to pay for the meal but out of the school fund simple articles of clothing are given them. These poor children do not, therefore, look shabby and thus their self-respect is maintained. Is there not in all this the making of a healthy people and a strong race? Can we in England afford to ignore the example here given? Is it not safe to argue, as the managers of the school funds in Paris argue, that whatever the faults of the parents, whatever may be done to the parents, still the children are blameless? Therefore, and without hesitation, if we would preserve the race, without the loss of a moment and without making a single exception, every hungry child must be fed. Economists, politicians, and others were left to discuss and to squabble over the rights and wrongs of the case, the school funds of Paris, encouraged by the municipality, commenced by building the kitchens, cooking the meals, and somehow or other things fell into their places, and to-day everyone is quite content and some not a little proud of the good that has been done.

BRUSSELS.

The War between Clerical and Communal Schools.—A Greater Need of Clothes than of Food.—One out of Five Children Fed, One out of Two Clothed.—The Medical Officers Examine the Children twice a Month; Prescribe "Preventive Treatment," and give all Pupils Lessons in Domestic and Personal Hygiene.—Municipal Dental Service.—Municipal Competition with Private Enterprise in sending Delicate Children to the Seaside.

BRUSSELS, July, 1905.

THOUGH the agglomeration of independent boroughs which is called Brussels is very small as compared to the metropolis of London, the city of Brussels is very much larger than the City of London. The *agglomération Bruelloise* may count some 600,000 inhabitants, a third of whom live in the city of Brussels itself. It is not a third or even a thirtieth part of the inhabitants of the metropolis that live in the City of London. In any case, whatever the historic city of Brussels has done is a matter of importance throughout Belgium and often serves as an example for the whole nation. In view of the physical degeneration of certain sections of the population not only in England but in all industrial countries, and of the fact that on all sides there is a very general conviction that better care must be taken of the children in the primary schools, I have made some inquiries as to what has been done here. Unfortunately for many years Belgium has been distracted by a fierce conflict for and against clericalism. The cause of education has consequently suffered greatly. There are two sorts of schools—the "free school," managed by the priests, and the communal school, managed by the municipalities. About the latter every possible information is forthcoming; every farthing spent is accounted for and vital statistics are forthcoming so that some information is at hand in regard to the health of the pupils. As for the free schools, the less said about them the better pleased are those who are interested in their maintenance. It is only when infective disease exists among the pupils that the authorities have a right of entrance to these schools and this right is derived from the laws which the French Republic established in Belgium in 1793. In such circumstances the only information available that would be of use for anything like a scientific investigation is that supplied by the local authorities concerning their own schools. Education in Belgium, though widespread, is not universal and there are still a good many children who do not go to school at all. This is notably the case with girls who are frequently kept at home to help in the household work. Nevertheless, in the primary

schools of Brussels much the same problems arise as those which have puzzled the education authorities in London and all the great industrial centres. It is evident, in Brussels as in London, that a certain number of children are insufficiently fed and are wanting in clothes, while others are absolutely deficient in health, stamina, and mental and physical development. It must further be recorded that in spite of the gravity of such a state of affairs no very heroic remedy has been attempted. Nevertheless, a good deal of steady work has been done, though reforms were introduced gradually and in detail and there has been no sweeping and sensational legislation.

A peculiar feature about such attempts as have been made is the fact that whereas in England the cry that the children must be fed has gone forth with swelling strength and volume, in Brussels it would seem as if greater attention is bestowed on the necessity of clothing the children. In any case the official reports show that during the school year 1903-04 the number of children frequenting the communal schools of the city of Brussels for primary, secular, and gratuitous education amounted to 13,994. From Nov. 16th, 1903, to March 26th, 1904, these children received 318,699 helpings of soup and 307,609 rations of bread. This was not given to all of the children, but to 2691 out of the number, or, roughly speaking, to one out of every five children. So that this might be done the municipality of the city of Brussels gave a subvention of £400. It also gave a soup subvention of £200 to the free schools—that is to say, to the clerical schools. It should further be mentioned that 679 little children attending kindergarten schools were likewise fed. On the other hand, and during the same year, no less than 2107 complete suits of clothes and 14,580 various articles of clothing were given to 7963 pupils attending the communal schools. Thus, putting the matter in round numbers, one out of every five children was assisted with gifts of food and one out of every two children with gifts of clothing. This is certainly very different from what is in contemplation in England where the question of clothes has scarcely been raised. A number of different charities and committees work to collect some of the money necessary to provide these clothes. Then when fairs are held the municipality charges the holders of booths, stalls, &c., a certain rent. A portion of the money thus received is devoted to the purchase of clothes for the school children. Moreover, the municipality supplies at the public cost raw material to the schools and the children are taught sewing, dressmaking, tailoring, and so on, by converting this material into clothes. In this manner 146 suits and 6771 different articles of clothing were made by the children themselves and were given to those among them who had need of these things. During the year various private charities supplied 1582 complete suits and 5428 articles of clothing, while 525 suits and 13,796 different articles of clothing were given by the municipality, that is to say, at the public cost. Still more was done for the little children who frequent the communal kindergartens. There are 3385 children inscribed and the average kindergarten attendance was 2848. Among these children private charity gave

218 suits and 2486 articles of clothing and out of the public purse they received 91 suits and 4224 articles of clothing. Private charity also distributed 3850 toys and 2649 gifts of sweets or of fruit to the kindergarten children. It cannot be said therefore that they have been neglected.

Perhaps the fact that the need of clothes is apparently greater than that of food may be due to the more orderly and economical disposition of the Belgian poor. Belgian women have more knowledge and skill with regard to their housekeeping than would usually be the case with a similar class of poor in England. It will then be easily understood that a well-ordered family, living on from 16s. to 20s. a week, may be able to give regularly the few pence daily required for each child's food but cannot afford an occasional outlay of several shillings to buy clothes. The parents might justifiably prefer to give sufficient food rather than to save money for the purchase of clothes. Thus in a well-kept household poverty manifests itself by the want of clothes rather than of food. This is possibly the reason why in Brussels more has been done in regard to clothing than to feeding the children. Doubtless if this clothing was not given and the parents were forced to spend the little money that they have in buying clothes, there would be more starvation among the children and consequently more food would have to be provided. So that the result would be somewhat similar in the long run.

Much more, however, is done than merely feeding and clothing the children. There is the all-important question of medical inspection and treatment. The schools of the city of Brussels are divided into six groups and each group has its medical officer. In normal times all the kindergartens, the crèches, and the classrooms devoted to primary education must be medically inspected twice each month. The class-rooms for secondary education or technical education need be visited but once a month. In each class-room there must be a thermometer and a written record kept of the temperature and this must be countersigned by the medical officer. He must also examine the pupils from the physical and intellectual point of view and endeavour to foresee and to check any abnormal development or tendency to disease. What is qualified as "preventive medicine" (prophylactic), such as cod-liver oil, may then be prescribed at the public expense. A remarkable feature of this medical service is that the medical officers have to give lessons on hygiene to the senior classes—namely, children about 12 years old. At the beginning of each month they must deliver a simple lecture or explanation. Then the pupils must write an essay to show that they have understood what they have heard and the medical officer looks over these essays and repeats on the next occasion what the essays show has not been fully understood. The following are the subjects which the medical officers have to explain and to lecture upon: (1) cleanliness of the person, the clothes, and domestic utensils; (2) the house, its cleanliness, the dangers of damp, the soil, the building materials, and plan of dwellings; (3) air, foul air, and ventilation; (4) water, when pure, when polluted, boiling and filtration, use and abuse of water; (5)

heat, fuel, and warming apparatus clothes and boots ; (6) light, artificial and natural ; (7) food, what constitutes wholesome food, adulteration of food ; the moral, intellectual and physical degradation caused by alcoholism ; (8) the excretions, care of the skin, mouth, hair, sight, and hearing ; (9) exercise, work, play, gymnastics, and rest ; (10) accidents, first care in cases of wounds, sprains, hæmorrhage, and poisoning ; and (11) contagious and infectious diseases, prophylaxis, and disinfection. For primary schools this seems a fairly complete curriculum and if the pupils apply these lessons to their home life a very considerable and all-round improvement should result.

In regard to infectious disease when a child is absent from school the parent receives a letter inclosing a post-card, with printed questions about the child which he must answer and post. If the child is detained because of infectious illness the Bureau of Hygiene is at once informed, and all children living with the patient are forbidden to go to school till after disinfection. The disinfection, of course, follows on the removal of the patient to the hospital or on death or recovery. Vaccination is not obligatory but during the year 2489 out of the 13,994 children were revaccinated, and this is a good number for revaccination is not offered till the children are nine years old. Apart from vaccination, "preventive" treatment was given to 3860 children out of the 13,994 and 3929 children were found to have defective teeth. Of these latter, 2251 presented themselves for treatment by the surgeon-dentist employed by the municipality to look after the school children. From the ailing or delicate children, 785 were selected and sent at the cost of the town either to the country or to the seaside where they enjoyed between them 9945 days of pure air, or rather more than an average of 12 days for each pupil. In this respect private charity ran a neck-to-neck race with public enterprise, for various charitable societies sent 798 children to the seaside or the country. But their outing was a little shorter, amounting to 8594 days in all, or an average of a little under 11 days for each child. These, of course, were the children from the free schools. Of the 785 children sent to what are known as children's colonies by the municipality only two failed to gain in weight. There can be no doubt, therefore, as to the very great amount of good achieved by these brief holidays in the open air or by the sea. Measures have now been taken to record more systematically the benefits that result. Next autumn all the children placed under special medical surveillance, or what is called "preventive treatment," and this is likely to be not far short of 4000 out of 14,000 children, will be weighed and the chest measurements will be taken. In this manner some valuable data will be collected and other improvements are likely to be effected from year to year.

According to a report drawn up for the municipality by Dr. Gaston Daniel in February, 1897, there were at that date out of 14,000 school children 2442 who were badly shod and 3620 in urgent want of clothes. Then 684 had no bed to sleep on and 2474 were insufficiently fed. These figures only deal with the communal schools of the city of Brussels and the principal difference to-day is that these

wants are better provided for. Nor must it be thought that the surrounding boroughs are neglecting these questions. For instance, the outlying district and borough of Anderlecht, which has a population of 55,002 inhabitants, has decided to provide a complete midday meal. All are to be admitted, even the pupils from the free schools; the only condition is that they must dine in the communal building. It is estimated that the meal will cost from $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $2d.$ The charge in any case will be $2d.$ and it is hoped that a slight profit will be made on this so as to help to defray the cost incurred for those who cannot pay. Tickets will be given to the children and great care taken not to let it be known who are those who can afford to pay. Above all, no child is to be exposed to any sort of humiliation. The municipality of Anderlecht will pay for these meals; no school child will be refused the food which he needs. If some of the outlay can be recovered from the parents this will ease the public burden but whatever happens the children must be fed. From all this it will be seen that the inhabitants of the city of Brussels and the neighbouring districts are moving forward. Philanthropy and private charity have done a good deal but this is all too uncertain and unequal in its effects. It is a useful help to municipal effort but it needs to be regulated, systematised, and evenly distributed by the municipal authority. Thus it is that the part played by the municipalities daily increases in importance.

From THE LANCET, August 5th, 1905.

MILAN.

Free Meal Exhibits by Italian Towns at the Milan International Exhibition.—The Sorry Show of the British Section.—The Milan Municipality endeavours to subsidise others, but soon has to do all work itself.—A beginning is made with Bread and Salame.—The Delicacies the Italian Poor enjoy.—Gradual Introduction of Hot Meals.—The Cost.—The Difficulty with those who Pay.—Large Families rarely Pay.—Parents contribute only £3,200 out of the £12,000 spent on Food.—Proportion of Payments steadily Decreases.

MILAN, Oct. 6th.

At the Milan Exhibition there is a long pavilion specially devoted to educational questions. In it are many exhibits that concern the sanitation of schools and the health, growth, and physical development of the children. Naturally there is the old question of school furniture, the providing of desks and chairs of varying height according to the different sizes of the children. Then there are physical exercises, gymnastics, dancing lessons, and other methods of rendering the children strong, supple, and graceful. All these and many other matters illustrated by specimens, by drawings, or by photographs, have been the subject of innumerable exhibitions in different parts of the world. The necessity of such appliances and methods is no longer a matter of doubt or dispute. But it is only of comparatively recent years that the educational authorities and the public generally have commenced to realise the futility of mental teaching and physical training when the child is insufficiently or unsuitably fed. At no period, presumably, could anyone have supposed that education without food was possible. Still, it was only after compulsory and almost universal education had been enforced for some considerable time that medical and other evidence was forthcoming to prove that a considerable number of children were rendered physically unfit and could not profit by their education because they were insufficiently fed. At first only a few charitable people and institutions attended to this matter. The insufficiency, untrustworthiness, inequality, and sometimes the wasteful extravagance of these charitable undertakings soon demonstrated that no mere individual efforts could solve what is really a national problem. This has been the experience of several countries as I have already related when giving the history of the Paris *cantines scolaires* and the feeding of the children in the communal schools of Brussels.* In

* See pp. 5 and 13.

Great Britain, as is known to all, the matter is ripening for legislation and Mr. Birrell advocated in the House of Commons the adoption of a system very similar to that in existence at Paris, of which I have given a description.* As in Italy there is widespread poverty the problem in that country is equally urgent.

A visit to the Milan exhibition suffices to demonstrate that the importance of the question is appreciated and that some notable efforts have been made to meet these requirements. Among the school exhibits in the Italian section there are reports, pictures, and photographs dealing with the *refezione scolastica* which is the Italian for what the French call the *cantines scolaires*. Perhaps when the thing exists in England we shall invent a word for it; in the meanwhile we must perforce content ourselves with talking vaguely about feeding the children. Nor is it only in the progressive north of Italy that such measures have been studied and applied. It was a pleasure and surprise to find that the first photograph I saw of children enjoying a meal at school was that of the *refezione* at Palermo in the far south. Here in a broad passage a long narrow table had been placed and it reached breast high, so small were the little girls standing on each side. But another photograph showed the boys comfortably seated in a large square room at different rows of tables. At Padua a passage has also been utilised, though this time it was boys and not girls who were standing at a table, and it is easy to see they were partaking of the national dish—macaroni. The commune of Brescia has photographs indicating that, according to the weather, the children dine either indoors or out of doors. It is a happy sight to see, be it only in a photograph, these children sitting under a graceful arcade or *portici*, sheltered from the sun while enjoying the open air and their daily meal. The San Remo school, which sends a photograph, has tables but no seats. The same can be said of Lodi, but at Bologna again we find the meals in the open air. The urban school of Aurora feeds 500 children in one single very large room. Several of these places also send photographs of the kitchens and kitcheners in which the meals are cooked.

A few steps further on are the school exhibits from Great Britain, but here there is no trace of an attempt to feed those who most need food. On the other hand, there is a photograph of the dining-hall at Newnham College, Cambridge. This, too, is within a few feet of the exhibition of l'Œuvre des Voyages Scolaires de Reims where poor French children are photographed taking their meal under some fine old trees. It would be in better taste to have withheld the photograph of the dining-hall provided for the young ladies who can afford to be educated at the University of Cambridge till such time as other photographs were forthcoming illustrating that Great Britain was not behind Italy in caring for those who are not so fortunately situated. The young ladies are not compelled by law to go to Newnham College; but the children of the poor, however insufficiently fed, must go to the primary schools. Therefore in the

* Loc. cit.

Italian section there are no pictures to indicate how the students who voluntarily attend universities are fed, but there are many photographs to prove the concern which is shown to insure that the poor who attend the elementary schools shall have at least a little food.

Unfortunately, it is but a little food. Perhaps we must be thankful for small mercies and allowances must be made for an institution which is only at the beginning, at the experimental stage of its existence. But I must confess that I was not a little disappointed when I found out how very small is the quantity of food actually given. As it was in Milan that I had seen these exhibits it was only natural to inquire first what the town of Milan itself had done in this respect. Consequently I called upon Senator the Marquis of Ponti, the Mayor of Milan, who received me with the greatest courtesy and introduced me to Signor E. Moiana, superintendent of the educational department of the Milan municipality, with whom I had lengthy interviews. It soon became apparent that at Milan, as in so many other places, the authorities, while recognising the necessity of feeding the children, were loth to take upon themselves the trouble and responsibility of such a service. There existed what are called committees of patronage, constituted to help in the general work of education, and the municipality fondly hoped to get out of the whole difficulty by voting an annual subvention of £4000 to these committees. Experience soon proved that this did not work and it was indispensable that the education authority should itself take the matter in hand.

There are, however, in such a question technical points involved with which municipal councillors are not necessarily familiar. It was resolved that a committee of nine municipal councillors should be appointed with the mayor as president. This committee was empowered to select specialists to help it; for instance, persons who were authorities on cooking or on the choice and purchase of food. Three such selected assistants could be appointed by the committee of nine to watch over each school. Thus the entire administration is in the hands of the municipality and its nominees. The number of children who are inscribed and supposed to attend the Milan primary schools is 46,000 in round figures. The question at once arose as to how many of these children would need to be fed at school, how many could go home for their midday meal, and what proportion would have to be fed gratuitously. Of course these figures were not ascertained at once and in the course of time modifications occurred. It is not necessary, however, to give other than the most recent figures so as to make known the actual situation.

As already stated, the municipality had estimated the outlay at about £4000 but it soon found that this was not enough to allow the expenditure of only 1d. per head per meal. Then there were no dining rooms, no kitchens, no plates, and nothing whatsoever in which any sort of cooking could be attempted. Therefore it was decided to commence by giving a cold collation and for this purpose it was thought that 100 grammes of bread would suffice (113·4 grammes equal $\frac{1}{4}$ pound). It was soon found that this was only

sufficient for the first and second classes. In the third class 120 grammes of bread are now given and 150 grammes to the fourth and fifth classes or forms, but at first smaller quantities were tried. Then came the question as to what the children should eat with their bread; and *salame* was the natural answer, as this is precisely what a workman in the majority of cases would ask for to help him to eat dry bread. It is the staple article of food throughout the country and is the ever-ready substitute for ordinary meat when the latter cannot be readily procured or prepared. Whether it is suitable as a permanent article of diet for children is a very doubtful matter. In any case it is tasty and artistically prepared. So much is this the case that in London it is sold as a delicacy in the "delicatessen" shops. One or two very thin slices of this sausage serve as an appetiser at the commencement of a banquet and it costs in London 1s. 4d. a pound. It has a perfume of garlic and is made of cured but not of cooked pork. What is served as a delicacy in England constitutes about the cheapest form of meat that can be given to the children who are fed at the public expense in the primary schools of Italy. But there is another sort of sausage which has the shape of a huge water melon. It is like the Mortadelle sausage but not so good, and this also is served to the children, but it is boiled. Therefore, it absorbs some water, so that a larger quantity must be given. Here, however, is the typical allowance made at one of the Milan schools where there is only a cold collation. With the amount of bread mentioned above on Mondays, 20 grammes of *salame*; Tuesdays, 30 grammes or one ounce of cheese; Wednesday, 25 grammes of cooked sausage; Thursday is the holiday. On Friday there are 22 grammes of chocolate, and on Saturday again 20 grammes of *salame*. Of course, though I use the word sausage, I mean a perfectly firm meat and not the sausage with which we are familiar in England.

These cold collations, I must hasten to add, are not approved. All that is said in their favour is that they are better than nothing. The building of kitchens and dining-rooms, the purchase of the necessary crockery, and the training of cooks are matters requiring time and, above all, more money than can readily be obtained. Still, a beginning has been made. There are now six of the largest schools in Milan where hot meals are supplied to 4500 children, or about 10 per cent. of the total number of children attending the schools. Hot meals will be introduced into two more such schools next year and these, the most favoured of the schools, are in the poorest quarter of the town. At these hot meals feeble children are often given eggs. The amount of meat allowed, whether it is boiled or roasted, is generally 25 grammes, or a little less than an ounce, weighed after it is cooked. The ration of cooked macaroni is 240 grammes, rather more than half a pound English weight. Of course it contains a good deal of water. Of *risotto* even more is given—namely, 275 grammes. When will it be possible to have *risotto* in England elsewhere than at an Italian restaurant? Why should the British housewife refuse to cook rice in an equally appetising manner? We have to pay large

sums in England and go to special restaurants to obtain what is given to the poorest children in Italy. Then when meat is cooked with potatoes 55 grammes are given. The cost for this food per kilogramme is in francs or *lire*, for *salame*, 2.80 francs; for cooked sausage, 2.95 francs; for gruyère cheese, 1.85 francs; for roast veal, after it is cooked, 4.80 francs; for *lesso* or boiled meat, 2.75 francs; for chocolate, 2.40 francs; for bread, 35 centimes; for rice, 39 centimes; and for Neapolitan pastes or macaroni (and these are the best), 46 centimes the kilogramme. Thus, wheaten flour consumed in the form of macaroni is about 25 per cent. dearer than bread, but how much nicer when artistically flavoured, and the poorest of Italians know how this should be done.

Though it is stubbornly affirmed that there is no such thing as trichinosis in Italy nevertheless it is the custom to give the cooked sausage twice in summer for once that the uncooked is given and the reverse is the case in winter. Unfortunately, the cooked sausage is not liked and cheese is preferred. Indeed, the boys as a rule prefer cheese or chocolate. It has been calculated that the cold collation only costs on an average 9 centimes per head, though in some schools they manage to spend 13 centimes. The municipality made arrangements with 50 bakers for the bread and 60 pork butchers for the *salame*. Such small contracts, it seems to me, leave the door open for many abuses, and I do not see how an efficient sanitary control can be kept over so many different and scattered purveyors. The municipality owns the public abattoir and proposes to build another and a larger one. If it were to introduce on the same premises a sausage-making department it would be much easier to keep effective watch over the quality of the meat given to the children in the form of *salame*. There are in all 80 elementary schools which children must attend from the age of six to 12 years and there is no charge made for the teaching. The parents, however, are supposed to pay for the stationery, the books, and the meals. The committee of patronage, which at one time had been expected to organise the meals, now only attends to helping poor families to send their children to school by buying clothes and books for them.

In regard to the meals, the principle is that every child must be fed and this is done by the parents if living near enough for the child to go home for the midday meal, or the child may purchase his meal at school; but if he is too poor to pay the meal is given gratuitously. As matters now stand, about half live near the school and are well enough off to go home to their meals. 33 per cent. of the total school population are inscribed to receive their midday meal gratuitously at school, while from 17 to 20 per cent. remain at the school at midday but pay for their meal. This small proportion of pupils who pay causes some trouble. If they pay they do not fail to grumble. They do not want a meal at 9 centimes, or a fraction less than a penny. Most of those who can pay at all can afford 15 centimes, or $1\frac{1}{2}d.$, and would prefer to give this sum and have a properly cooked hot meal rather than pay much less for only bread and cold sausage.

When the parents cannot pay they must send a written demand to the municipality and then one of the delegates of the municipal education commission makes inquiries. The deciding factor in judging such cases is generally the number of the family. If there are only two children then the parents may be forced to pay for the meals of one of them. Also if the children look in ill health then the food is not refused. Altogether the gratuitous meals are very readily given. Roughly speaking, the meals now cost the municipality about £12,000 annually. The parents who pay for their children's meals have given in all £3200 in the course of the year. It is important to note that here, as elsewhere, the tendency is to increase, and to increase extensively, the number of meals given gratuitously. Thus, when in 1900 this service began meals were given on only 133 days out of a possible 174 days of school attendance. The outlay was then set down at 98,300 francs. During the second year, however, free meals were served on 153 days and cost 149,337 francs. In 1903 the free meals cost the municipality 247,766 francs and 277,603 in 1904. The outlay will now exceed 300,000 francs and the number of pupils who manage to establish their claim to be fed gratuitously is ever increasing. The nearer the school to the outskirts of the town the larger the proportion of gratuitous meals required. This is due to the fact that the children come from a greater distance and that their parents are generally agricultural workers.

From all this it will be gathered that a great deal has been done, but principally in an experimental manner. The authorities have been led by force of circumstances to extend and to improve step by step, acting according to expediency and the exigencies of the moment rather than in obedience to some fundamental principle and in harmony with a clearly-defined theory. To the more logical and theoretical mind the experiences of the conservative municipality of Vercelli will be far more interesting and these I hope to describe at an early date.

From THE LANCET, Oct. 20th, 1906.

FREE AND COMPULSORY FEEDING AT VERCELLI.

The Difference between Education and Instruction.—The Communal Mid-day Meal as a Means of Education in Savoir-Vivre and the Duties of Citizenship.—Parents not allowed to give anything to their Children which might occasion Jealousy or a Feeling of Inequality.—Rich and Poor alike forced to attend the Mid-day Meal.—Exemption from this Meal only sanctioned on presentation of a Medical Certificate.—Clothes Provided to uphold the Pride of the Poor.—Mixed System of Payment allowed at the Infant School, but Absolute Equality in Dress and Food is maintained.

VERCELLI, ITALY, October.

IN the Fabian tract No. 120, entitled "After Bread, Education," p. 9, occurs the following passage: "There is a little town in Italy, Vercelli, where this policy is carried out with logical completeness. There attendance at meals is as compulsory as attendance at the school, unless a medical certificate is produced to show that feeding would be injurious to the child." This was so startling an announcement that I at once determined to seize the first opportunity of verifying the facts on the spot, particularly as the pamphlet in question gives no further information on the subject. Vercelli is just half way on the main line of railway between Turin and Milan. There was consequently no difficulty in proceeding to that town after I had completed my visit to the Milan exhibition, schools, and slaughter-houses. Vercelli is what in England would be described as a sleepy little town with the grass growing up between the pavement stones of some of the streets. But it has a cathedral, and, what is more interesting, a church dating from 1219 and the early Gothic of the interior is well preserved. The last edition of Baedeker sets down the population of Vercelli at 17,900, but I found that the inhabitants were quite indignant at this assertion, maintaining that 30,000 would be nearer to the correct figure. In any case there are many educational establishments, and twice a week the town does seem well peopled, for these are the market days. Farmers from many miles around then come to buy or to sell, notably the rice which is extensively grown in this part of the country. Considering the very rural character of the town, the absence of any large industry, and the slight contact of its population with the great centres of political thought and activity, it was scarcely to be expected that such a place as Vercelli would take any very daring initiative such as is suggested by the heading of this article. It has, however, done so and this as

the result of party politics. Such political considerations are outside the scope of those who deal with the question from a purely scientific point of view, but their results demand attention.

In pursuit of my inquiry several documents were submitted to me and notably the report sent by the Vercelli municipality to the Educational Department of the Milan exhibition. They were far too lengthy to attempt anything more than a brief summary of some of the leading points. From these I gather that on April 19th, 1900, the municipality of Vercelli appointed a special committee with the mayor for president. Signor Pietro Lucca, the representative of Vercelli in the Italian Parliament, was the chief instigator of this measure and he explained that the committee was nominated so as to study how education as well as instruction could be imparted to the children attending the primary schools. The law rendered education compulsory but it left the local authorities free to select the means by which education was to be enforced. The debate and the arguments were all devoted to the question of education as distinct from instruction. The instruction given was judged satisfactory, but the education was very deficient. Attendance at school was obligatory, yet some parents were too poor to send their children. They could not provide them with food or with books. Therefore measures had already been taken to supply books and stationery, at least in the elementary classes. The principle of assistance in kind had thus been established; there was no legal objection to its more extensive application. By the aid of municipal subventions and of charitable donations the poorest children had received some instruction and the object now was to educate them. The committee then came to the conclusion that the most practical method of education would be to provide a mid-day meal. It was not a question, as in England, of starving children and of physical degeneration, nor was it a question of mere instruction, of the mere learning of lessons; it was a question of education in the higher sense of the term, of moral education, of education in the art of *savoir vivre*. The teachers had urged that during class hours there was no time or opportunity to educate the children in the principles of etiquette and politeness which are all based on the great moral principle of unselfishness. To find time for such a purpose it was necessary that the children should not go home in the middle of the day, but should remain at school and be taught how to behave during recreation hours and at table. As matters stood, on leaving school and once in the street, the children soon acquired objectionable and rough habits and bad language. Parents could not fetch them away from school and during these two hours in the middle of the day they got into all kinds of mischief.

It was easy to understand that if the children were kept from the street and if their meals and their play-time were under the kindly and intelligent surveillance of the teachers their manners would improve. The masters also urged that it was easier to study a child's character and to ascertain what were his natural capacities during play-hours than in the class-room. But, on the other hand, how were the children to be fed? The parents had not the time or

the means to take meals to their children at school. Then if the parents were, in some way or other, to give food to their children there would be painful contrasts. Some children would bring with them ample provision, others the meanest of fare. Another important consideration was the fact that if in winter when it was cold and wet the children had to go home for their midday meal they travelled backwards and forwards four times in the one day. This caused too much exposure and consequently a considerable amount of sickness among the children. Therefore it had already been recognised as indispensable to feed at least those children whose homes were a long way off. A charity had attended to this. The number of children who required feeding was, however, greater than the charity could support with the slender funds at its disposition. Therefore the municipality had added in the first instance an annual subvention of £40, then of £80. Thus it was the Charitable Committee of Patronage which took the first steps for the feeding of the school children of Vercelli, but it only attended to those children who lived so far away that they could not easily return home in the middle of the day. Subsequently it attempted to feed all the children during the colder months of the year. This was but an experiment and its success was rendered difficult for want of money.

Many different proposals were made. Some urged that all parents who had sufficient means should be compelled to pay for the meals which their children took at school. The majority of the specially appointed committee and generally of those who discussed the matter did not agree with this. They said that the feeding of the children could not be considered as a charity. This idea of charity was degrading and therefore mischievous. If education was compulsory, and the law had rendered it compulsory, then all that was necessary for education must be given. Now it was recognised that the sort of education which could be given only at meal times and during the recreation hours was as necessary as the mere teaching from books during the class hours. Therefore the provision of means of recreation and of the midday meals formed an integral part of the general scheme of combined instruction and education. Throughout, the argument raised was not that the children were starving but that every endeavour must be made to teach them to live in the spirit of good fellowship. For this reason objection was raised to any interference on the part of the parents, as this might create rivalries, jealousies, and a sense of inequality between the children. Already in regard to books and stationery great care was taken not to humiliate poor children. The rule is that children of the fourth-class should pay 7 lire a year for their books. The poor, however, get these books for nothing but care is taken to explain to the child that the books have not been given to him, that they belong to the municipality and are only lent. In a word, there is a free library at the disposal of those scholars who for one reason or another cannot buy their own books. In due time these lesson books must be returned. In regard to copy-books the child must show that he has kept his copy-book in good condition before he gets another one,

and here we find a practical lesson in tidiness. It was in the neighbouring small commune of Viverone, where Signor Lucca, the Member for Vercelli, has his summer residence, that the books were thus first lent.

Signor Lucca's idea seems to have been to endeavour so to educate children as to efface in their minds all trace of that "class war" which Socialists maintain cannot be prevented except by the advent of Socialism. The free meals were to be given not because the children could get no food but as a means of instilling in their minds sentiments of brotherhood. Hence the partaking of this meal was to be obligatory, as well for the rich as for the poor. By daily taking a meal, and identically the same meal, together and then playing together the children would receive education in good manners in their civic duties and be made to understand that they all belonged to the same community and had duties to perform towards that community.

Thus it will be seen that the purport of the free meals was absolutely different from that which has brought the question of the feeding of school children before the British public. At Vercelli it was not a question of supplying to the children the food necessary to prevent starvation and physical degeneration. This, it was believed, the parents did, with but a few exceptions, in a sufficiently ample and satisfactory manner. But it was felt that children could not be kept at school from nine in the morning till four in the afternoon without food. The morning classes lasted two and a half hours. So the question put was the amount of food necessary not to feed a child but to compensate the waste of energy incurred during two and a half hours of schooling. Experiments have been made which set forth that the waste of calories and nerve energy during two and a half hours can be compensated, according to the age of the child, by from 100 to 140 grammes of bread with 20 grammes of cooked *salame*, or 14 grammes of raw *salame*, or 20 grammes of cheese. This quantity has been fixed by various physiological authorities and it is also considered that this dry food is better than soup. Then practically it is not so difficult to distribute as soup. Such a meal ought not to cost more than $7\frac{1}{2}$ centimes, or $\frac{3}{4}d.$, per child. When a meal of this description was first given to all the children at Vercelli, but only during the winter months, it cost the municipality 13,000 lire, or £520.

An important consideration is the fact that the use of dry bread, of sausage, or cheese dispenses with the necessity of knives, forks, or spoons, and even of plates. But the absence of these table utensils very much lessens the opportunity of teaching good manners while the children are eating. There are consequently advocates of other than dry meals and they propose to spend more money so that a proper hot meal shall be supplied. As matters now stand, during the sixth year (1905-06) of the present experience the number of pupils attending the Vercelli primary schools was 2260; this includes pupils from the suburbs. The hours last year were from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M., with one and a half hours' interval commencing at 11.30 A.M. The

pupils of the fifth and sixth classes did not receive free meals. Those of the fourth class had 140 grammes of bread, those of the third 122 grammes, and the first and second classes 100 grammes. Being a Roman Catholic country they had 20 grammes of cheese with the bread on Fridays, but on the other days meat was given with the bread in the form of 14 grammes of uncooked or 20 grammes of cooked *salame* sausage. The masters and mistresses have to eat the same food in company with their pupils, but they are allowed twice the amount. This is a guarantee, for they would complain if the quality of the food was not good. Each ration has in practice cost from 7 to 8 centimes. At the beginning of the day the master or mistress draws up a list of all who are attending his or her class. Three copies of this list are made. One the teacher keeps and the two others are sent to the *economo*; that is to say, the financial manager at the educational department of the municipality. The latter functionary keeps one of the lists to register and the third is sent to the kitchen or the purveyors. At 10 o'clock the rations are prepared. The food must be of the first quality. It is inspected every day by the financial manager and occasionally by the medical officer attached to the schools. The scale for the rations given at Vercelli is also adopted by the management of the schools at Pavia, only at Pavia the sausages are taken whole to the schools and cut up by the masters. At Vercelli the contractor cuts the sausage up himself and places the right number of thin slices for each ration in small pieces of white paper. These are all first taken to the town hall, where the inspector every day weighs some of the rations and tests them by the sense of colour, smell, and taste. As, whatever else he may ignore, every Italian knows the difference between good and bad *salame*, the question I ventured to put that such a test might not, scientifically speaking, be considered sufficient, only elicited looks of scornful surprise. Contracts have been made with two tradesmen for the bread, with one for the sausage, and with another for the cheese.

Before the midday meal was thus definitely organised and when meals were only given during the bad weather a good many pupils failed to attend school during the spring. They remained at home helping their parents to work in the fields. So general became this practice that the examinations were held in April to enable the rural children to get away. It is claimed that now there is food to be had at school these children are willing to remain till the end of July if necessary and thus obtain a much better education. The population of the schools may be roughly divided in three equal parts. The first is not poor, the second is not well off or rather poor, and the third is really poor. For the children of the first of these three classes the simplicity of the meal given may almost be considered a hardship. They would willingly pay if they could be allowed to have a hot meal, but it would destroy the purpose of the free meals if money could purchase any sort of privilege. So rich and poor must be fed alike and if any child refuses to eat the medical attendant is sent for. Some 10 per cent. of the children, mostly the richer

children, have contrived to get medical certificates giving them permission to go home and exempting them from attendance at the communal meal. Thus for the month of December last the attendance at school showed that 22,298 meals should have been served but the actual number of meals consumed amounted to 20,022 and that represents, in round numbers, 10 per cent. of absentees.

Further to prevent class distinctions between the children and also, as a secondary consideration, to keep them warm, a certain amount of clothes is provided at the public expense. The municipality supplies raw material to the sewing classes. They make chemises, petticoats, bodices, handkerchiefs, drawers, woollen socks and stockings, &c., which the poorer children wear. More than 500 such articles were produced in the course of last year.

All this, however, has not been accomplished without considerable opposition and many difficulties. Notably the interests of the teachers had been completely forgotten. These at best are paid most miserable salaries. For the first four to five years they receive £40 a year and after that the increase is only to £48 per annum. For this they are to teach five days a week during ten months of the year. But with the new conceptions that the meal hour and the recreation time were the most fruitful moments for educating the children, the teachers found themselves deprived of the leisure which they used to enjoy in the middle of the day. At last a compensation has been granted but it only amounts to £2 per annum. This is obviously insufficient. It is also becoming evident that the meal given to the children is insufficient. It may, according to the chemical and physiological theories, suffice to supply the average number of calories lost in two and a half hours' study, but it does not suffice to satisfy the children of the well-to-do classes who are accustomed to much better fare at home and still less does it satisfy those who are insufficiently fed at home. So both rich and poor desire better meals and it is now all but decided that kitchens shall be provided and hot and complete meals prepared. On the other hand, it is not yet decided who shall pay for this. The feeding of the children last year in reality cost some £1200 though the meals did not exceed an average of $\frac{3}{4}d.$ each. What would it be if hot meals were served? At least double this amount. At the present moment a reaction is taking place. There is an attempt to re-introduce the charitable element, to make the wealthier section of the community pay for the meals of their own children and subscribe for the meals of the poorer children.

The situation also is complicated by the fact that a different system prevails in regard to a large infant school—that is, a mixed school of boys and girls from three or four years old up to the age of six. At a cost of £12,000 derived from endowments and donations a magnificent new school has been built for these very young children and was inaugurated on the day of my visit. It is quadrangular in shape, with a large central court. In one part of the building a spacious dining-room is provided, with broad windows on each side. There are a number of low tables with circular holes in them in

which the bottom of the soup plates fit. The children were all dressed in bright light-blue or pink check pinafores and had a plateful of *minestrone* set before them. As this was the first day, the cooking range used and the cauldron had not been properly manipulated. Nevertheless, the *minestrone* was tasty. In it were bacon, a large quantity of rice, and carefully selected flavouring of onions and aromatic herbs. There are in this school large recreation rooms for the children to play in when the weather is bad. Baths and douches are also provided and there are much air, space, and light.

Several hundred little children are gathered together here; they belong to all classes of the community, there is not the slightest difference in their appearance, and all are treated exactly alike. This school, however, is conducted on the theory that the parents should pay for the midday meal. It is a better meal, a hot meal, but each parent is supposed to pay 1s. 3d. per month per child. A considerable number of parents, however, fail to make this payment so the municipality is obliged to grant a subvention to supply the difference. Then to complicate the situation further there are voluntary subscriptions, so the children are fed partly by the money paid by their parents, partly by charitable donations, and partly out of the public purse by means of a municipal subvention. Yet there are not a few persons at Vercelli who are satisfied. They think the result is good even if the means employed are illogical and contradictory.

Unfortunately, the whole situation at Vercelli is dependent upon political considerations and the theories of Signor Lucca are criticised not always on their merits but from the point of view of his political opponents. It is a great source of weakness that such questions should be influenced by party politics.

From THE LANCET, Nov. 10th, 1906.

SAN REMO.

The First Italian Municipality which undertook Eleven Years ago to Feed the School Children.—Rivalry between the Conservative and Socialist Parties in this respect.—Elaborate Proportional Statistics of the Cost per Head of Education, of Feeding, and of Local Government.—Forcible Dissolution of the Municipality, and Attempt to Stop the Feeding of the Children.—Failure of the Attempt.—The School Budget Doubled.—How the British Help to Feed Italian School Children.—Thirty-seven per Cent. of the Children Fed but only Five per Cent. Partially Pay for their Meals.—Average Cost 1½d. per Meal.—Extra Payment to Teachers for Attending at Meal Times.—Proposed Abolition of all Individual Payments.

SAN REMO, ITALY, November.

SAN REMO boasts of being the first town in Italy where the municipality undertook to feed the children attending the primary schools. At Cremona and in other towns the children were fed but not by the municipality and at the public cost. Abroad San Remo is principally known as one of the most popular health resorts and winter stations of the Italian Riviera. The population consists of many small peasant proprietors who have land to till in the neighbourhood and of a number of artisans and waiters recruited in all the larger towns of Italy so as to do the work rendered necessary by the numerous visitors. These latter are mostly British and German and many villas and hotels have been built and furnished for them. The hotel waiters are so well organised that they have succeeded in electing one of their number on the municipal council. Indeed, in 1896 a Socialist majority was returned at San Remo. As the free maintenance of the children is one of the planks of the Socialist platform the organisation of free meals in the schools was one of the first measures adopted by the newly elected council. It was not till the year 1900 that the municipalities of Milan and of Vercelli followed this example. As a proof of the popularity of such measures it is encouraging to note that the municipalities of both these towns are Conservative. On this question of feeding the extremes of both sides of politics meet. If it was the Socialist municipality which commenced feeding the children at San Remo it was a member of a Conservative Government who introduced at Vercelli a system of school meals that is more complete and thorough-going than anything the Socialists themselves had ventured to attempt. The fact that to-day both parties are at one in this matter must greatly encourage those who advocate the establishment of the *refezione* or *cantines scolaires* for primary schools.

In the first instance, however, there was no such agreement. When in 1896 the majority of the San Remo municipality proposed to organize the *refezione* the minority laughed at the idea and treated it as absurd and as impracticable and utopian. Nevertheless, in spite of the opposition, a considerable number of meals were given during the very first year of office. Fortunately for the history of the movement elaborate statistics have been kept, and what the system means in money can be accurately estimated. Thus, during the first year that attempts to feed the children were made by the municipality—that is to say, from 1896 to 1897—there were 1618 pupils inscribed and 1384 actually attended the classes. The total revenue or receipts of the municipality that year amounted to 713,234 lire or francs. Out of this sum 46,731 francs were spent on primary education. This equals one-fifteenth of the total expenditure on the local government of the town. It is equal to 2·89 lire per head of the population, whereas the previous year only one-eighteenth of the total receipts had been expended on education, and this was equal to 2·40 lire per head of the population. The difference was caused by the fact that more assistance was given to the poor children and that 4518 lire, or £180 14s. 5d., were spent in providing meals. The annual average cost for each pupil thus increased from 26·24 lire to 28·88 lire, or from £1 1s. to £1 3s. 1½d. By the following year the *refezione* was better organised, more extensively applied, and the cost increased to 7943 lire, or £317 14s. 5d. The number of pupils inscribed increased to 1845, and those who actually attended to 1492. The total outlay on education was 52,856 lire, and this is equal to 3·55 per head of the population. But while the expenditure thus increased the receipts were also augmenting and now reached the figure of 930,736 lire. Thus, though a larger amount was spent on education and on feeding, the proportion to the total expenditure fell to one-eighteenth.

At that time, however, public opinion had not been converted to the cause and the mere fact that the feeding of the children was the act of a Socialist administration helped to accentuate the opposition, especially of the Government. The auditors, acting on behalf of the State or central authority, threatened to disallow the amount of money spent on the meals and to compel the municipal councillors to reimburse out of their private pockets what they had illegally allowed to be spent out of the public funds. This, however, proved to be but an empty threat. According to the Italian law the Central Government has a right to interfere when a municipality is in financial difficulties. In that case the Government may limit municipal expenditure to what is strictly necessary and not allow any outlay on what may be described as luxuries. The municipality of San Remo had therefore a very easy reply. First and foremost it was not in financial difficulties. On the contrary, its receipts were increasing and the town was in a flourishing condition. If, nevertheless, the Government insisted on preventing expenditure on luxuries, then it should close the municipal theatre or the municipal casino, for surely such institutions were

greater luxuries than the feeding of poor children. These arguments were irrefutable but the Government found another method of interfering. In 1898 some serious riots took place at Milan. There was much distress in the North of Italy and the Government appeared to be alarmed greatly by the state of ferment prevailing. The Socialist municipality of San Remo was dissolved and the Conservatives were installed in office. The two years of practical application had, however, sufficed to demonstrate so thoroughly the usefulness of the free feeding that it could not be absolutely abolished. The new administration sought, however, to re-introduce the charitable element. Instead of holding itself responsible for the expenditure it handed over the whole organisation to a committee of patronage and contented itself with giving this committee an annual subvention of 6000 lire, or £240. This it continued for the four years during which it remained in office. The annual municipal receipts rose from 908,733 lire in 1899 to 1,224,515 lire in 1902 and still only 6000 lire were given towards the cost of the free feeding of the children. It must be said, on the other hand, that if the municipal receipts were augmented there was no increase in the number of children attending the schools. Though the Conservative municipality did not spend much on the feeding of the children it increased the salaries of porters and various attendants at the schools and the subsidies to asylums where children are sent voluntarily. Thus the average annual cost of each pupil rose from 28.53 lire to 41.38 lire, though the proportion that this latter figure represents is only equal to one-eighteenth of the augmented total municipal expenditure.

Subsequently the Socialists returned to power. By that time all opposition to the feeding of the children had ceased. As already described, the Conservative party at Milan and at Vercelli had itself established the *refezione*. Consequently the municipal budget of San Remo for the year 1903 presents a very different aspect. Instead of a charity subvention of 6000 lire there was a direct municipal outlay of 12,934 lire, or £517 7s. 4d. The committee of patronage was abolished and direct management by the municipality, instead of being opposed by the Government, was on the contrary actively encouraged. Thus the amount spent on the meals given has increased each year, being 13,667 lire in 1904, 15,813 lire in 1905, and for 1906 the estimate is 16,153 lire, or £644 10s. 5d. During this last year the average cost per pupil for education and feeding is estimated at 58.15 lire, or £2 6s. 6½d., or 4.80 lire, or 3s. 10½d. per head of the population. This is about double the amount of the school budget of the year 1896, that is, the last year before the municipality attempted to feed the children. In 1896 the average cost per pupil was 26.24 lire instead of 58.15 lire, and the cost per head of the population was 2.40 lire instead of 4.80 lire as in 1906. In spite of this great increase, the proportion of the general income devoted to education has not increased and is for 1906 one-fifteenth of the whole, just the same as in 1897. If so much more is spent on education to-day it does not imply a greater burden on the population, but is, on the contrary, the witness of

greater prosperity. In 1897 the population of San Remo was 16,189 and the municipal receipts amounted in all to 713,234 lire. For 1906 the population is set down at 20,027 but the estimated receipts are 1,434,946 lire. Some of this income is derived from direct taxation on property like the rates in England, but in Italy the *octroi* system is still maintained as the principal means of raising local revenue; therefore, if the income of San Remo has increased, this in the main indicates that more money has been spent in the town, more provisions have been consumed, and thus the town dues, or *octroi*, have yielded a larger income. In ten years this income has doubled but the fixed population has only increased 20 per cent. This is, of course, due to the large number of visitors who spend a part of the winter season in this beautiful spot. Being foreigners the latter are not included in the census of the population, but as they are large consumers of provisions they pay a considerable amount in indirect taxation for the expense of local government. A very considerable proportion, probably a good half, of the foreign visitors are British subjects, and if they have not as yet done much towards helping the underfed and degenerating children frequenting the primary schools in England they have with every pinch of salt and every meal consumed at San Remo contributed to secure the free feeding of the Italian children of that town. It would be difficult to prove that these visitors are worse off because of this, but there would be no difficulty in demonstrating that the children have greatly benefited.

Notwithstanding such advantages and a flourishing budget, the Socialist municipality of San Remo has not ventured to go so far as the Conservative municipality of Vercelli. At the latter town, as already described, all the children, poor and rich alike, receive their midday lunch at the expense of the municipality. Those only are exempt who have a medical certificate that the meal would not suit them and these exemptions amount to not more than 10 per cent. of the pupils. At San Remo the number of pupils entered for the school year of 1905-06 was 1650; the number that actually attended was 1381. Of these 720 were entered in the books as entitled to the daily meal, but only 508 actually partook of these meals. Of these 274 were boys and 234 were girls. It will be seen that the proportion of children fed by the municipality was much below that of Vercelli—namely, 36 to 37 per cent. at San Remo and 90 per cent. at Vercelli. Further, of the children fed at San Remo a few paid for their meals. Of the 720 children inscribed about 40 were to pay if they attended. The amount to be paid varied from 1s. 2½d. to 2s. 5d. per month according to the means of the parents. Of course, the food, whether given to the children who paid the smaller amount or the larger amount or nothing at all, is the same in every case.

If a fewer number of children are fed at San Remo than at Vercelli they are, on the other hand, very much better fed. While opposition was still offered to the system an attempt was made to revert to the cold collation of bread and sausage. When once, however, the standard of living has been raised it is difficult to lower it again. The children having once become accustomed to warm meals

made bitter complaints when they were given only a little cold bread and *salame*. Also, and perhaps fortunately for them, the sausage was on several occasions not fresh. This helped to justify the dissatisfaction and the warm meals had to be resumed. At present vegetable soup is given three times a week, and soup made with meat on the other two days of the school week. The meat, of course, is cut up and eaten afterwards. Looking over the accounts for the scholastic year 1905-06 it will be seen that the price of bread varied from 33 to 35 centimes ($3\frac{1}{4}$ d. to $3\frac{1}{2}$ d.) the kilogramme (2.204 pounds). Thus the bread is dearer than in England. The amount consumed in the year was 7573.5 kilogrammes. The meat cost 1.88 lire the kilogramme and 670.4 kilogrammes were employed. The macaroni and similar pastes cost 43 centimes the kilogramme, or a little more than bread, and 2983 kilogrammes were purchased. The rice cost 38 centimes and 1231 kilogrammes were required. Oil only cost $11\frac{1}{2}$ d. the litre and 268.70 litres were used. The consumption of wine, only 384 litres, was restricted mainly to the attendants or given to a few of the more delicate children. The cost was 33 centimes, or $3\frac{1}{4}$ d., the litre—roughly speaking, 2d. a bottle—which, as things go, is a good price to pay for wine in a wine-growing country. The potatoes cost 11 centimes the kilogramme, and 3356 kilogrammes were purchased, together with 930 kilogrammes of haricot beans at 41 centimes. Less than £2 were spent on fresh fish during the whole year, but salt, which is heavily taxed, cost more than £4. This, with a few other unimportant items, such as flavouring herbs, &c., constituted the material from which during the year 71,602 separate meals were served. The average cost of these meals was 17 centimes, or nearly $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. But this sum covers another considerable outlay which has not yet been mentioned and which involves a very important principle.

At Paris, at Vercelli, and elsewhere the position of the teachers has been brought forward. If they are obliged to attend to the children's meals then they are deprived of the relaxation in the middle of the day to which they are accustomed. For this extra work there should be extra pay and at Vercelli, as already stated, the teacher's salary has been raised by £2 per annum. At San Remo the municipality has acted with much greater liberality. It has selected eight or nine of the teachers to attend especially to the free meals and pays them over and above their ordinary salary £2 per month. As the schools are open for from seven to eight months this is an increase of £14 to £16 a year per teacher and the total cost last year amounted to £132 12s. Then a sum of £48 4s. was paid to servants, scullery maids, and others. At first the teachers were not employed to attend to the children during the meals and outside help was secured. But the children did not respect or obey these outside helpers so the services of their ordinary teachers had to be retained. The total cost, as already stated, of the free feeding amounted last year to £644 10s. 5d. for the 71,602 meals given to 508 children. Out of this sum the fees to the teachers and the wages to the servants absorbed £180 16s. The cost for management if there were a larger

number of children fed would not be as great in proportion. The present municipality hopes to raise the outlay to about £1000 per annum and to feed, practically speaking, all the children whether poor or rich. It feels convinced that this would not only simplify matters and prevent some bad feeling but would be a considerable economy for the parents. The cost of the meals paid in taxes would be much less than the cost of the meals which the parents now give to their children at home. The only possible solution is to give the meals to all and without any charge to the individual. As it is the parents have to send an application which is examined by a commission of inquiry. The commission judges by the amount of direct taxes paid by the parents whether their children should be fed gratuitously. The commission is very broad in its decisions, and any approach to poverty suffices to justify the gratuity of the meals. But there is always the liability of accusations of favouritism—the suspicion that municipal councillors do not like to refuse the requests of their electors. No such suspicions or accusations would be possible if it was an established rule that the cost of primary education should include the cost of a midday meal for all who attend the school. This would put an end to patronage and to favouritism. Also none of the children would be obliged to go home for their meal in the middle of the day. This going out into the streets is a recognised evil, as it is then that the pupils contract many bad and vulgar habits. Therefore the present municipality hopes soon to offer the midday meal free to all the children whatever the position of their parents. Also it is about to appoint a special medical attendant who will give gratuitously whatever medicine he thinks the children may need. This will be done in response to the agitation in respect to the spread of tuberculosis so as to discover the earlier symptoms among the children. At present the general medical officer of the town can be called in but there is no special medical officer for the schools. Again, and also in view of checking tuberculosis, some money is to be spent in enlarging the playgrounds of the schools. This will be a further inducement for the children not to go home for their midday meal.

Thus it will be seen that in Italy the movement for the feeding of the children in the primary schools was, as in England, started merely as a matter of charity and by private initiative. Then, in the course of time, some municipalities began to give free meals at the public cost. This at first evoked considerable opposition and the legality of such action was challenged. In time, however, the contending political parties accepted the principle, the Government gave its approval, and now the rival factions compete with each other as to who shall feed the children in the best and most complete manner. In England we are only just approaching the threshold of the question. Therefore the experience of Italy, where it has been in the domain of practical politics for ten years, must be of considerable value. The Italian experience will help to indicate what developments are likely to occur in other countries when dealing with similar problems. On the other hand, as notably at San Remo, a considerable number of school children have now been fed, more or less well,

for ten years, it is time that statistics should be forthcoming to illustrate the physical results. Comparisons of the death-rates during the school age, before and after the introduction of the free feeding, would be useful but periodical records of the weights of the pupils, together with chest and other measurements, would be still more conclusive. This doubtless will be organised by the special medical officer who is to be intrusted with the care of the children at the San Remo schools.

From THE LANCET, Dec. 1st, 1906.

MENTONE AND NICE.

Paris a Quarter of a Century ahead of London, but the French Riviera Towns are not up to date,—Building Kitchens for all the New Schools at Mentone, and Preparing to Feed the Children.—The New Law for the Relief of the Aged.—Illogical Absence of System at Nice—The Children of the Rich share the Charitable Donations given for the Poor; the Poor partake of the Meals paid for by the Rich, the Municipality provides Kitchens and Utensils, and all lunch together on a footing of Absolute Equality.—The Complete Feeding at the Public Cost of all the Little Children in the Infant Schools.

NICE, November.

AT San Remo, on the Italian Riviera, as already explained, there has been a pioneer municipality in respect to the question of the feeding of children in the primary schools. Over the frontier in France this is also a pressing question, though it is in Paris rather than on the Riviera that the student must look for an instructive example. So far back as 1877 the prefect of the Seine issued a circular to all the schools stating that the municipal council of Paris had resolved to study how a good, wholesome warm meal could be given every day to every child attending school. It was not, however, till the year 1884-85 that a considerable number of meals, more than a million portions, were actually served out to the children. Nevertheless, even this latter date places Paris 12 years in front of San Remo, and before anything really effective is accomplished on the other side of the Channel Paris is likely to be a quarter of a century ahead of London. The French towns of the Riviera, however, have lagged behind not only Paris but the great provincial centres, such as Lyons, Havre, and Roanne. Thus, several of the Riviera towns are much in the same position as English towns, with this difference—that they have behind them the force of a public opinion that is well informed on the whole question.

MENTONE.

Crossing over the frontier from Italy by the romantic bridge of St. Louis close to the troglodyte caves where the fossilised remains of some of the earliest human inhabitants of the world were found, the first French town is Mentone. Here some of the most modern problems of human existence are the subject of daily study and

experimentation. If the troglodyte cave-dwellers had their difficulties, the providing of dwellings of all sorts to modern populations is a much more complicated matter. For instance, the town of Mentone has just spent £24,000 upon a new drainage scheme and it is quite certain that the troglodytes made no such sacrifice in dealing with their homes in the rocks. The application at Mentone of some of the most modern methods of civilisation affords an interesting contrast to the mode of existence of prehistoric man, of which abundant traces are to be found so close at hand. Among the modern problems to be dealt with by the municipality of Mentone is that of feeding the school children. On August 10th, 1905, the municipal council voted a sum of 9000 francs (£360) so as to build kitchens and to provide what was necessary to establish a *cantine scolaire* at a group of schools in course of construction in the Condamine district. But the works were not then sufficiently advanced for this proposal to be realised. Now on July 19th, 1906, on the proposal of the mayor, the sum voted was raised to £400. This was adopted and the scheme was submitted in due course to the prefect by whom it was endorsed in the name of the Government.

At the new schools of the Condamine district of Mentone there will be about 350 boys and 250 girls. For them the £400 will be spent, so that proper kitchens and all that is necessary should be built at the same time as the schools themselves. Nothing as yet has been planned for the other schools. In the Forti district there is school accommodation for 400 boys and in the Conception district for 250 girls. There are also infant schools capable of holding 200 children who are from three to six years old. Altogether there are about 1450 children for whom a daily meal in all probability will have to be provided. No decision to this effect has been taken but this is the obvious trend of events. Though up to now the children have not been fed in the Mentone schools, it is very generally admitted that the time is not far off when all the children will have to be fed. On the other hand, the schools are such old and unsuitable structures that it is anticipated that they must be pulled down. Then it will be much easier to provide for meals in the building of new schools, thus doing for other parts of Mentone what is actually in course of execution in the Condamine district. Already the mayor has been authorised to buy land for the construction of a new school in the Caravan quarter. Therefore it is not proposed to make any alterations in the old schools.

The population of Mentone—that is to say, what is denominated as the municipal population—numbers about 18,000, and there are as visitors during the winter from 18,000 to 20,000 foreigners. These foreigners are for the most part British and German subjects and it appears that the German visitors are as numerous as the British. The native population consists of agriculturists who cultivate land in the neighbourhood of Mentone, of fishermen and dockers, and of the artisans and workmen who do the work needed by the inhabitants and the visitors. This population, as already stated, send to the primary schools about 1250 pupils and 200 little children to the maternal or

infant schools. The question then arises as to how many of these parents can afford to pay for the meal to be given to their children at school. At Mentone, as throughout France, an object lesson will be given next year in dealing with what may be described as the other end of the problem—namely, the feeding, not of poor children, but of the aged poor. In practice it is thought, at least by the authorities at Mentone, that organising of the one form of help will be of assistance in regard to the other. The new law rendering obligatory the giving of relief to the aged was passed in July, 1905, and its application will commence on Jan. 1st, 1907. This law enacts that all persons who are 65 years old and who are notoriously without resources have a right to apply for relief to the communal authorities if they have resided in the commune for five years, otherwise the municipality is not responsible. The applicant does not, however, lose his claim, only he must address himself to the departmental or county authority, if he has lived in the *département* for one year. Finally, if he has no such local standing then he must send his application to the central government and it is the State that pays. The money help given must not exceed 20 francs, or 16s. per month. If this does not suffice to meet the case the applicant may be boarded out in some rural district in a cottage with peasants or others who are willing to take in such boarders. Finally, the third and last solution is to send the applicant to an asylum or poorhouse.

As this law will come into operation shortly, the Mentone authorities have already made the necessary inquiries and investigations. They find that out of their municipal population of 13,000 there are 140 aged persons entitled to relief under the new law. Further, on the list of the *bureau de bienfaisance*, or poor relief bureau, there are 142 indigent persons inscribed who are not 65 years old but are so poor as to be considered to be worthy of public assistance. So here, in any case, are 282 persons who could not possibly be expected to pay for the feeding at school of any children for whom they may be responsible. It will be seen that the service of inquiry for the application of the law on old-age pensions and poor relief will have done a good deal of the work necessary to enable the authorities to decide with regard to the children who should be fed gratuitously. At the same time the feeling is gaining ground everywhere that this attempt to make distinctions does a great amount of mischief. On the other hand, the children are so much better fed at school, and, as a wholesale transaction it costs per head so much less than if they were fed in retail at home. Therefore many argue that it would be a great saving to the parents to pay for their children's midday meal by taxation rather than to attempt to cook these meals each on a separate fire in a different house. In view of this growing opinion the Mentone authorities have determined to provide kitchens and all that is required for feeding all the pupils whenever they build a new school.

NICE.

Travelling homewards from Italy the next important town after Mentone is Nice. Indeed, it is the most important town on the French Riviera. It is the historical capital of the old Italian Duchy of Nizza and the capital of the modern French Department of the Alpes Maritimes. 500 years before the Christian era it was known to the Phocæans as Nicæa. The first *cantines scolaires* established at Nice by the municipality are now ten years old. Here, as in so many other places, the object was not to feed children because they were starving but only because some of them came such distances that they could not go home for their midday meal. There is a very large but scattered population on the outskirts employed in market gardening, in horticulture, and in the cultivation of flowers for exportation or for the making of perfumes. Their children go to the nearest schools at Nice and notably to that of the St. Maurice district. They carried with them a little basket containing something for lunch ; but of necessity such food was always cold. This was not considered good for the children. Therefore the municipality at its own expense built kitchens, provided cooking utensils and plates, and paid the salaries of the cooks. All these expenses being defrayed at the public cost it was easy to provide each child with a good, substantial, warm vegetable soup for 1*d.*

From the financial point of view the system is very mixed. Firstly, as the entire plant and the wages of the cooks are provided by the municipality, the rich as well as the poor benefit alike from this public outlay. Those, however, who can afford it are called upon to pay the penny for the purchase of a soup ticket. The poor who cannot pay receive the ticket for nothing. But, according to the example given first in the Montmartre district of Paris, care is taken not to humiliate the poor children and the gratuitous tickets are given to them privately. Nevertheless, although a considerable number of children are fed gratuitously, there has been no deficit. The municipality has not been called upon for any financial subsidy. Nor was the cost of the material of the *cantines* heavy. The municipality build small out-houses with walls only one or two bricks thick, spent a few hundred francs in the purchase of saucepans and plates, and then heard nothing more about it. The reason of this is that the cook never spends more than she has in hand. If there are only a few pence then the soup is correspondingly weak or consists only of the cheaper vegetables and a smaller allowance of butter or oil. But the soups are generally very good, and though the ten centimes, or penny, paid is supposed to cover the cost of only a vegetable soup the children often get an excellent and nutritious meat soup. This is due to the fact that the charitable phase has not yet been abolished. Well-intentioned people go about asking for donations so that the children may be fed and in response some persons have given as much as £4. It is then that the cook buys meat and not only meat but chocolate, sweets, or cakes. This seems

very inconsistent, for needless to say once these things have reached the school it is absolutely impossible to make any selections among the pupils. There can be no difference between the children of the rich and the children of the poor. All sitting round the same table must be fed alike. As the Director of Public Instruction remarked to me, "any such distinction would be fatal to education." Thus it happens that on some days when there are no other receipts than the pennies the children who can afford to give the pennies pay for those who cannot pay anything at all. On the other hand, when there is a donation from the outside then the children of well-to-do people equally with the children of the poor are in part fed out of charitable donations. It is such complications and inconsistencies as these that give rise to the demand for a municipal or a State tax to cover the entire cost of the feeding. The poorer the man, especially in France, where the *octroi* system prevails, the greater is the proportion of his income that goes to the paying of taxes. Therefore, if the children were fed at the public expense the poor, through taxation, would largely contribute towards the outlay, while a very numerous class of the community would find the extra tax cheaper than the cost of feeding their children at home. Then everyone would be entitled to the meals since everyone would have contributed to pay the cost. At Nice extreme poverty prevails, chiefly among the Italians who come over to do navvy's work and other forms of ill-paid unskilled labour which the natives will not undertake. These poor Italians are by nature inveterate beggars and they profit by the Church and other charities, and notably by the Assistance Publique or public relief organisation. To help them and the poorer sections of the French population there are two institutions. One is known as *Le sou de l'Ecole Laïque* which gives clothes and books, and the other is the *Caisse Scolaire* which only gives books. In regard to school books, the demand is so great that the sums given by private charity do not suffice, and the municipality has to add an annual subvention of £240 to the funds of the *Caisse Scolaire*. So here again there is a mixture of the old ideas of voluntary charity with the modern conception of compulsory taxation for the maintenance of public services. In some of the richer quarters of the town these problems have not yet arisen. The parents are all in easy circumstances and their dwellings are so near to the schools that the children can without difficulty or appreciable loss of time return home for their midday meal.

Thus it will be seen that the feeding of the children in the primary schools at Nice is not organised on any definite and logical principle. Payments by the parents, payments by the municipality from the public purse, and private charitable donations are all three inextricably mixed. But this is not the case with regard to the maternal or infant schools. Here attendance is not obligatory and yet the municipality has assumed the entire responsibility. This is a practical necessity, though theoretically inconsistent. The parent may say that as he is forced by law to send his child to the primary

school, the authorities, exercising this compulsion, must see that the child is none the worse because he obeys the law and therefore must give food if food is required. But the parents are not forced to send their children to the maternal schools. These are offered to the parents for the convenience of the parents, whereas the primary schools are enforced on the parents for the good of the State, which, to hold its own in competing with other nations, must have an educated population. However, whatever may be the force of these theoretical considerations, in practice it is of even more importance to see to the proper feeding of children from the age of three to six than it is when, being older, they are better able to look after themselves. Therefore, the municipality of Nice has undertaken to feed and to feed well and at its own cost all the children sent to the maternal schools. These schools are open from six in the morning to six in the evening. They receive children of both sexes from the age of three to six and the municipality is considering a scheme for keeping these schools open till nine in the evening.

The object, of course, of the maternal schools is to enable the parents to work with the knowledge that their young children are properly watched and cared for during their absence. The parents have not, as a rule, time to fetch these children for the midday meal and the children are too young to go home alone. Therefore the children must have their midday meal at the schools. But for the maternal schools many parents would not be able to go to work and this would greatly reduce the supply of cheap labour while increasing the amount of pauperism which has to be relieved. Thus it pays indirectly to provide for these little children.

At the maternal schools of Nice it is supposed that, however early the child arrives, he has had some sort of food before leaving home. Then he takes with him a basket containing a trifle, it may be a piece of bread and an apple or some bread and chocolate. This the child eats at about five in the afternoon. So it is only the midday meal which the municipality provides, but it is a complete meal, not merely a bowl of vegetable soup. On the contrary, the soup is often made with meat; and, in spite of the cost, pure milk is given to those children who seem more especially to need it. As a rule, a kilogramme of meat is allotted to six children every two days. Thus a complete hot meal is given every day and this without any question of charity, or of the parents being rich and poor. No questions are asked, no inquiry is made, and no payment is demanded; all are fed alike and all are well fed, with the exception of invalids and delicate children, and these are still better fed. This free feeding continues for 11 months in the year, for the maternal schools are open much longer than the ordinary schools. The total school population of Nice varies from 12,500 to 13,000 children. Of these, 2000 are not six years old and therefore attend the maternal schools where they are all fed. The feeding of these 2000 little children for 11 months costs the municipality of Nice £1200, and I am not aware that anyone has ventured to begrudge this outlay.

CANNES AND TOULON.

The Embryonic Condition of the Question at Cannes.—Early Beginnings.—The Italian Poor and the Clerical Schools.—Former Pupils Organise and Agitate for the Establishment of Canteens.—The Theory that Feeding is a Matter of Necessity and therefore cannot be a Matter of Charity.—The Toulon Municipality Defrays all Working Expenses; the Children pay 1½d. per Meal, and this yields a Profit.—The Profit generally suffices to cover the Cost of the Few who Cannot Pay, notably the Unemployed.—Regularity of Work at the Arsenal renders Unemployment exceptional.—The Dissolution of the Religious Orders greatly augments the Demand for Gratuitous Meals and necessitates larger Municipal Subventions.—An English Precedent.

CANNES.

OF all the winter stations on the Riviera none are so largely patronised by the British aristocracy as the town of Cannes. If the presence of rich people adds to the wealth of a town then the finances of the Cannes municipality should be in a prosperous condition. Nevertheless this town has shown but little concern for the feeding of its school children. Perhaps it will be urged that children are not so poor here as elsewhere but there is no evidence forthcoming to that effect. The wages paid at Cannes are not higher than in the neighbouring towns, yet the authorities are only just beginning to take the question of *cantines scolaires* into consideration. Indeed, the first endeavour to organise something of the sort was made by one of the teachers and not by the municipality. The most important schools at Cannes overlook the railway line close to the railway station. These are known as the Farrage schools, with 500 girls in one set of buildings and 400 boys in other buildings adjoining. In the Brocca and Croisette districts there are schools for 400 girls, and 300 boys have school accommodation in the Montchevallier, 150 in the Avocat, and 350 in other districts. Altogether some 2100 children frequent the primary schools of Cannes.

At the Farrage school for girls the head mistress noticed that some of the girls were suffering. They were cold and hungry. For the most part these children lived a long way from the school and what food they might bring with them was insufficient, cold, and cheerless. Thereupon the head mistress went to the municipality and asked whether she could have gas, saucepans, and a few plates. It was only a matter of a few pounds and assent was readily given. This was the beginning. A charge of 3d. per week of five days is made and for this a good bowl of hot vegetable soup is given. In this

manner some 50 girls are fed every day. They all bring something with them which they eat with their soup or some pastry or chocolate to eat after the soup. All these girls come from a distance ; none who live in the town are accepted, as these are sent home for their midday meal. Even this very small matter has given rise to complications, for it was difficult to find anyone to look after the girls while they had their midday meal. 50 girls require some waiting upon, even though they only have a bowl of soup each and the teachers have to go to their own quarters to get their meals and their rest. In the boys' schools the masters refused to attend during meal time. There were many disputes over this matter. Finally it was resolved to pay a gendarme to be present, though it seemed absurd to bring in the strong arm of the law with sword, revolver, and cocked hat to distribute bowls of vegetable soup to children. Then the matter was further complicated by the fact that at the Farrage schools there were at least 30 children who were so absolutely poor as to be incapable of helping themselves in any way. Some clothes had to be given to these children and some books and also some food. A charitable institution known as the *Sou des Ecoles* was already providing food in the infant or maternal schools for children whose parents could not pay. The municipality and this charitable organisation have both been helping in an irregular manner some of the children in the primary schools.

Evidently the whole question of the feeding of the school children is in an embryonic condition at Cannes. Nor does the existence of any widespread misery and destitution make itself felt. If it existed anywhere it would have been among the frequenters of the congregational schools—that is to say, the clerical schools established by religious orders. These schools were frequented by the children of Italian labourers. The Italians earn lower wages and are more needy than the French population. They therefore sent their children where there were more patronage, more pious helpers, and many others who, for political purposes, gave doles to these clerical, anti-republican centres of education. Now, however, the nuns and monks have been driven away and those who were in receipt of relief given to them for sectarian and political motives are drifting to the communal or State secular schools ; so that the problem of feeding the children will become more acute in consequence of the advent of this more destitute section of the population. If the municipality of Cannes could afford to neglect the matter formerly it can no longer do so now that the congregational orders have been dissolved. It is true that a certain number of free schools have been started. Here the teachers are for the most part former pupils of the communal schools. Nevertheless they are as clerical as they dare to be. These schools are run for political purposes and in opposition to the Government. Consequently, as a means of attracting pupils, the managers will be more ready to give free meals, stationery, clothes, or anything else that the pupils may need than a municipality which has to render account to the electors and taxpayers of every penny which it spends. Nevertheless, the system of education which the nation, as

represented by its Parliament and by the large majority of its municipal electors, has resolved to apply is not likely to be defeated by such stratagems as the more liberal distribution of soup in the free as opposed to the communal schools. At the same time it is fortunate for the children that this contest between the rival parties should take the form of seeing who shall best feed them.

There is an association at Cannes of the former pupils of the Farrage schools. They have been moved by all these matters. They have held meetings, passed resolutions, and, finally, waited on the mayor. At the commencement of October last the mayor informed this association that for the coming winter *cantines scolaires* would be organised in the communal schools of the town. Not only will food be forthcoming but it has been decided that free education shall henceforth be considered as including the free use of the stationery and the books necessary for such education. These latter cost at Cannes about 16s. per pupil per annum. Then at the girls' schools there are to be cookery classes once a week, and it is thought that on these days the free feeding will be of an extra luxurious description. When all this is done by the municipalities then such charities as the *Sou des Ecoles* can devote all their resources not to what are necessities but to what may more correctly be defined as charitable purposes. Thus little children under six years old are left 10 or 12 hours at a maternity or infant school. That during the whole of the day they should have some food is not a question of charity but of absolute necessity. If little children were left ten hours without food it would be a case of manslaughter. But if a child is of delicate health the fact that his parents cannot afford to send him to a more bracing climate can scarce be accounted as manslaughter. So the argument put forward is that feeding is not charity but necessity. The School Halfpennies—that is, the society which collects halfpennies for school charities—should spend these halfpennies on charities, not on necessities. Already the *Sou de l'Ecole* sent last year 28 children from the Cannes schools to spend some weeks high up in the mountains. If this charity had not had, at the same time, to pay for the feeding of some of the children in the maternity schools it could have sent a greater number to the mountains. Now if the municipality assumes the full responsibility for all the *cantines scolaires* then the *Sou de l'Ecole* institution will be able to devote all its resources to more purely charitable purposes. Thus it will be seen that Cannes is on the eve of a great change, and this is the moment when the process of transition can best be studied.

TOULON.

The French Riviera may be said to begin at Toulon. Close at hand is Hyères, the most ancient of all Riviera stations, and many of the winter residents at Hyères do a considerable amount of their shopping at Toulon. What is occurring at Toulon can

easily come within the scope of the observations of British visitors to the Riviera. Thus they can continue to study while abroad the problem of the free feeding of the school children. The example given at Toulon is important because it is a large industrial town and therefore more like the great centres in England than mere pleasure and health resorts. It is true the principal industry is that of the arsenal, so that Toulon is more like Portsmouth than, for instance, a Lancashire manufacturing town. There are at Toulon a large working or artisan class and classes who, though not poor, are nevertheless obliged to be economic. These latter are for the most part half-pay officers and other State pensioners. They make many complaints about over-taxation. Consequently the municipality of Toulon had to be careful not to expend more money than was absolutely necessary for the feeding of the children. On the whole it has had an easy task, for the Toulon artisan has a high sense of his personal dignity and would scorn not to meet his own liabilities. He certainly does not ask for, or seek to obtain, any sort of charitable help. Nevertheless he wants to follow in the movement and wishes that Toulon, like every other centre, should have its *cantines scolaires*. Therefore the education department of the Toulon municipality called upon the primary schools to establish canteens. The municipality reserved for itself a right of control but left to each school a large measure of independence in the details of organisation.

The fundamental principle is that the pupils shall pay for their meals, but in practice it is recognised that a certain number of them cannot pay. The town then interferes, insisting that these children shall be fed whether they have money or not. No matter who is to blame, in no case must a child be allowed to go without food, and when necessary the cost will be reimbursed by the municipality out of the public purse. There are at Toulon 43 schools. There are mixed schools for boys and girls where 1990 pupils attended in the year 1905. In the boys' school there were 4310, and in the girls' school 3070 pupils. Finally, the maternal schools harboured 1996 little children. This is a total of 11,366 and the municipality set the figure down in round numbers at about 12,000. At the end of the month the cost of feeding the children is reckoned up and if this is greater than the payments made by the parents the municipality makes up the difference. Further, the municipality supplies all the plates, the stoves, the fuel, and pays the salaries of the cooks—in fact, provides everything except the actual eatables. With this very important help—that is to say, the payment from the public funds of all the working expenses—the managers of these cantines have found no difficulty in providing good meals for 15 centimes, or $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ each meal. Indeed, not only can this be done, but if those who cannot pay anything at all are not very numerous it suffices to cover the cost of their meals also. Nor is this all; if every, or nearly every, pupil pays his $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ there is generally a surplus or profit remaining. In that case better food is given or some delicacies, cakes, pastry, &c., are supplied. So if there is a loss, the

municipality reimburses the loss ; if there is a profit, the children benefit. But it is not often that a loss is recorded. The demands addressed to the municipality for such reimbursement are few and far between. The school teachers are well acquainted with the social position of the children and they decide whether or not the parents shall be called upon to pay.

As so much is left to the discretion of the managers of the schools, and as the schools rarely ask for financial help from the municipality, the educational department has but little information to give. At the town-hall there are no statistics, no precise figures forthcoming, which in itself is a proof that the *cantines scolaires* have not been much of a burden. This is due to the fact that the vast majority of the parents are able to feed or to pay for their children. Many of them go home for their midday meal and, so far as I could gather in the absence of any precise figures, it is only from a quarter to a third of the pupils who remain at school and take their midday meal at the *cantine scolaire*. A large proportion of the fathers of the children are employed at the arsenal and earn from 3.50 francs to 4.50 francs per day, so they can well afford 15 centimes for their children's meals because their work is regular. In other occupations, especially in the building trades, the wages may be as good but employment is very irregular ; consequently there are moments when the parents, being out of work, cannot pay the 15 centimes. Then, of course, no pressure is brought to bear. The municipality is ever ready to feed the children of the unemployed.

Though everything has worked well so far and with little or no friction, nevertheless it is felt that the whole question must be taken in hand anew and looked into more closely. The abolition of the congregational schools will alter the circumstances. Here as elsewhere it means that a much lower and poorer class of children will frequent the communal schools. The children of labourers, especially Italian labourers, will miss the priests, monks, and nuns from whom they used to beg all sorts of charitable assistance. Their children must now go to the communal schools and will be fed, not by charity but at the public cost, and after due and effective inquiries have been made. It will no longer be a question of attending mass regularly and of winning the favourable consideration of some lady bountiful appointed patroness of a charity more or less allied to a political organisation. The parents will not have to show their devotion to a church or to a political party, but will have to prove in an absolute, positive, business-like manner that they are really not earning enough to pay for their children's meals. There is no doubt that the law dissolving the monastical orders or congregations will fall heavily on those who have relied on begging as a means of supplementing their meagre earnings. But, on the other hand, the law now throws upon the State and the municipalities increased responsibilities. To-day, though on a much smaller scale, there is taking place in France a change somewhat like that which occurred in England after the Reformation and which ultimately compelled Queen Elizabeth to enact the Poor-law. Then

the voluntary collections ordered by Henry VIII. were insensibly and gradually converted into compulsory assessments. At last came the celebrated 43 Eliz. c. 2 (1601) which definitely established the English Poor-law as a substitute for the aid that used to be given to the poor by religious orders which had been suppressed at the Reformation. On a smaller scale a similar suppression has just taken place in France and consequently the need for the free feeding of the children at the communal schools will be more keenly felt than in the past. Thus it comes about that many towns which had neglected to establish *cantines scolaires* are now busily engaged making up for this deficiency. In towns like Toulon, where the *cantines scolaires* already exist, the municipalities are examining the details and inquiring what improvements or extensions may be necessary. At Toulon the tendency will be to assimilate the management and so to arrange that the treatment of the children shall be equally good in all the districts. At present it is liable to differ. The resources may vary, as also the skill in management. As the municipality has the right to exercise a general supervising control it is desirous of adopting measures so that all the children will be equally well fed no matter what school they may attend.

From THE LANCET, Jan. 5th, 1907.

MARSEILLES.

Ten per Cent. of the Children attend the Canteens and Half Pay for their Meals.—The Girls take more Soup and Pay better than the Boys.—At the Maternity Schools only One-sixth Pay.—Dr. Flaissières and the Canteen By-Law of 1893.—The Legal Menu.—How the Soup Maigre, the Pot-au-feu, and the Ragout are made.—The National Bouillon et Beuf.—The Art of Cooking Inferior Meat.—Sampling the Meals.—The Extravagance of Beef Steaks.—Good Taste, Skill, and Pains-taking produce for 1½d. Artistic and Refined Meals.—The School Canteen an Object Lesson in the Preparation of Economic but Succulent and Appetising Dishes.

THE MENU, THE COOKING, AND THE COST.

THERE are not many children fed at the *cantines scolaires* of Marseilles but those who are fed are well fed; also whatever is done is fully recorded. Thus at the town hall I was supplied with these figures: "School population on July 31st, 1906—boys, 19,266; girls, 19,739; maternal schools (that is to say, schools for children from three to six years old of both sexes), 9473; in the crèches, 275 babies; total, 48,753." In regard to the feeding the last complete statistics are for the year 1905, and these show that 1609 boys frequented the *cantines scolaires*, 1473 girls and 1950 children under six years old attending the maternal schools. This makes a total of 4832 and as the school population was much the same in numbers as it is now this is equal almost precisely to 10 per cent. of the whole. Thus, at Marseilles 90 per cent. of the school children return home for their meals and of the 10 per cent. who avail themselves of the school repast a large proportion—namely, a small half—pay for their food. The following are the exact figures and they are instructive as indicating what the organisers of midday meals in the primary schools of a large seaport town may expect. The number of helpings of soup served to boys during the year amounted to 224,271; of these 117,473 were given gratuitously and 106,799 were paid for. The girls received a little less—namely, 217,363 helpings of soup. They, however, paid for a much larger proportion—namely, 118,522—and only received 98,841 gratuitously. In regard to the schools for little children, or maternal schools as they are called in France, the figures are very different, not only at Marseilles but wherever I have been able to make the comparison. The practice of feeding in the maternal schools is much more general and the extent to which this is done gratuitously is widespread. Thus, instead of only 10 per cent.

availing themselves of the *cantines scolaires* we find 1750 out of 9473, or more than 18 per cent. They also received a greater number of helpings, though this can be explained by the fact that at the maternal schools nothing but soup is given and that the children are too young to go home alone in the middle of the day, while at the other schools there are regular dinners with meat, vegetables, &c. The number of helpings of soup served at the maternal schools is set down at 371,568, but what is more important than this large figure, for which an explanation has just been given, is the fact that of all these helpings only 59,327 were paid for and the remaining 312,241 were given gratuitously. Whereas at the boys' and girls' schools the parents managed to pay for more than half the helpings of soups given not one-sixth of those served in the maternal schools were paid for by the parents of the children. This is very natural. The principal use of a maternal school is to offer a shelter to little children while their mothers are at work. Of course, it is only among the poorest sections of the community that the mothers have to work as well as the fathers.

In most, if not all, of the *cantines scolaires* established in connexion with the schools for boys and girls not only soup but a regular meal is provided. As a rule, most of the children have the entire meal but some take the soup only and others do not have soup but only take the courses that follow. These latter in the statistics come under the general heading of "portions." The difference is but slight; thus it has been stated that the boys consumed a total of 224,271 helpings of soup and to this figure I can now add that they also had a total of 225,878 "portions" and they paid for 117,349 of these portions, receiving 108,529 gratuitously, thus again paying for the larger half. The girls consumed 216,276 portions, or 387 portions less than in the case of the soup, while the boys took 1607 more portions than soup, showing a slight preference on the part of the boys for solid as opposed to liquid food. But again the girls were ahead of the boys in regard to payments for they only received 98,925 portions gratuitously and paid for 118,051 portions. Taking the grand total there were in the maternal schools and in the boys' and girls' primary schools 4832 children who during 1905 received soup from the *cantines scolaires*: they paid for 284,648 helpings of soup, and did not pay for 528,554 helpings of soup, making a total of 813,202 helpings of soup provided by the *cantines scolaires* in the year. Deducting the 1750 children fed at the maternal schools where only soup is given there were 235,400 portions served to the boys and girls in the primary schools which were paid for and 207,454 which were not paid for, making a total of 442,854 portions. Adding the 813,202 helpings of soup, we get the grand total of soup and portions amounting to 1,256,056. Of these 520,048 were paid for by the parents of the children and 736,008 by the municipality.

The by-law or *règlement* under which the *cantines scolaires* are organised by the municipality bears the date of June 22nd, 1893, and was drawn up and adopted when Dr. Flaissières was Mayor of

Marseilles. As a doctor of medicine and a sanitary reformer Dr. Flaissières naturally appreciated the importance of securing sufficient food for the children. At that time, some 13 years ago, there were only three or four schools where meals were provided and these were only given in exchange for payment. Further, such endeavours were absolutely voluntary, untrustworthy, and uncontrolled. So it was decreed that municipal *cantines scolaires* should be established wherever there was reason to believe such "an institution would respond to the needs of the working population." The municipality undertook to provide all the material necessary, an inventory would be drawn up, and the directors of the schools would be placed in charge of this property. Each *cantine* would have a *cantinière* nominated by the mayor and placed under the authority and direct control of the head of the school. A committee of 22 members would be appointed by the mayor, presided over by the mayor or his representative, and would examine the demands made by the families who stated that they were unable to pay for the feeding of their children while at school. The *cantinière* or cateress is paid £1 12s. per month as wages. One of her duties consists of warming whatever food the children may bring with them and she must on no account accept any sort of payment from the children for any such service.

This latter is an important consideration. Parents may be able and willing to supply their children with food but if the children bring such food with them it must of necessity be cold. At Marseilles such food may be warmed free of any charge whatsoever. As the community supplies the entire school gratuitously to the children, including the services of the teachers, it was not considered a very great effort to add the services of the *cantinière* and a small space in the kitchen stove to warm the meals. Apart from the midday meal the *cantinière* may sell to the children chocolate and dried preserved fruits but not the ordinary sweets which children hanker after though they are often far from wholesome. The by-law has articles enforcing absolute cleanliness in the kitchen and in regard to all the utensils used; moreover it enters into the detail of the weekly menu. Thus it is stated that on Monday there shall be "lean" soup—that is to say, soup in which there is no meat—but with rice, beans, peas, lentils, oil, or butter it may be nutritive and substantial, while it is rendered tasty by the variety of vegetables used together with aromatic and flavouring herbs. Then follows a *ragoût*. This is a generic term for meat braised or stewed in conjunction with other, generally vegetable, ingredients. On Monday this stew, it is proposed, should be made of the neck or breast of mutton, with potatoes, haricot beans, or Italian paste of the macaroni kind. On Tuesday, instead of a lean (*maigre*) there is to be a fat (*grasse*) soup—that is to say, a soup made with meat, probably the national *pot-au-feu*, or beef slowly simmering in a great variety of vegetables, with burnt onions to colour and thyme and garlic to flavour. Thus a beef soup is obtained which is not insipid like English beef-tea. Then follows the beef itself, not the stringy, tasteless fragments of beef which remain after beef-tea or soup has been made in an English

kitchen and which are only fit to be thrown to the dogs but good meat from which firm slices can be cut. As this meat is impregnated with the flavour of numerous vegetables it is savoury though it is only boiled beef. Of course for this purpose prime pieces such as the sirloin are not employed. On the other hand, if the inferior pieces of beef were roasted, as is very generally the custom in England, they would be tough and tasteless. By the above process the meat is rendered at once tender and tasty though only the cheaper pieces or joints are used. Very generally some of the vegetables from the soup are served with the beef when hot. This, indeed, is the French national dish. *Bouillon et bœuf* are to the Frenchmen what roast beef and Yorkshire pudding are to the Englishman. The British fare is good only when the quality of the beef is good, but the French fare is good when the quality of the beef is inferior. This is an all-important consideration as everyone cannot be fed on prime joints; the cheaper portions must also be consumed especially where economy is necessary. Thus, though meat is very dear in Paris, at all the ordinary workmen's restaurants an *ordinaire* can be obtained for 4*d.* This is the usual name given to a plateful of *bouillon* followed by a large thick slice of the beef with which the *bouillon* has been made. The meat is accompanied with some of the vegetables if it is hot, or with pickled gherkins if cold. By spending 4*d.* or 5*d.* more, wine, bread, and cheese can be obtained, and thus for from 8*d.* to 9*d.* the workman has a substantial if a very plain meal. On a smaller scale this is the sort of meal suggested in the Marseilles municipal by-law for the *cantines scolaires* on Tuesdays. Evidently it is calculated that the amount of beef employed will not make soup for two days, as on the Wednesday there are vegetable soup, macaroni, and beef, probably braised or fried. Thursday is the weekly holiday. On Friday there are another vegetable soup and a *ragout* of whatever meat may be preferred, and on Saturday we find again the *ordinaire*—namely, the *bouillon* and the beef and the vegetables with which it has been made. Now comes the important question of the quantity. This also is specified in the by-law. The helpings of soup, whether vegetable or meat soups, are set down at 30 centilitres, or half a pint. The meat, whether in the form of boiled beef or a stew, is given in portions of 50 grammes, or one and two-thirds of an ounce; with half a pint of potatoes, haricot beans, lentils, or other vegetables. Latitude is allowed to modify this menu according to the season of the year and the charge made is 5 centimes for the soup and 10 centimes for the portion of meat, that is 1½*d.* for the entire meal: but in the higher schools frequented by older children it is allowable to charge a little more for larger helpings.

All the police stations at Marseilles keep paper tokens, tickets, or cheques which the parents of the neighbourhood buy and give to their children. These are collected by the teachers the first thing in the morning and given to the *cantinière* who then knows how many meals she must prepare. If, however, a child arrives at school without a cheque for a meal and the teacher thinks he needs food the teacher may give soup provisionally. The teacher must then at once

communicate with the parents and the town authorities. The parents must apply personally or by writing to the educational department at the town hall. Their case is investigated and if it is thought that they are entitled to free meals for their children they receive the cheques directly from the municipality instead of having to buy them at the nearest police-station. When, however, the child arrives at school no one knows whether the cheque which he holds in his hand has been bought and paid for or has been received gratuitously by the parents. Thus at Marseilles, as at Paris and elsewhere, the greatest precautions are taken not to humiliate the children. The cateress has to enter in a book, and to keep careful account of, all her purchases and all the helpings of soup or meat which she has served. Every fortnight she must present her books at the town hall and then all the cheques which she has received for meals are converted into cash. The money which she thus receives must be all spent on food and not on any kitchen utensil, or fuel, or soap, or dish-cloths, or any other item. Thus it will be seen that a considerable portion of the cost of the meals is paid for by the municipality even when the parents purchase the dinner cheques for their children. Moreover, the 22 members of the committee are supposed to pay surprise visits at meal times and to weigh at least five portions and thus to verify that the proper amount is given.

When I was at Marseilles I visited the communal school for boys in the rue Puget. This is an old house not built expressly for a school. The room where the meals are served gives on to the play-yard and is rather dark. The tables were covered with tin which was easy to keep clean. There were no serviettes as I had seen at the Paris canteens. Some 60 boys were at table; a few drank water but the majority had brought a little of the ordinary red wine of the country with them. They probably drank about two ounces of wine containing 10 to 12 per cent. of alcohol, to which about 100 per cent. of water was added. A large proportion of those who were not able to pay for their meals were at least able to pay the fraction of a farthing which so small a quantity of wine cost. The menu on the day of my visit consisted of potato soup followed by beef and macaroni. The latter was not the tasteless, insipid macaroni boiled in milk as served in England. It was *macaroni au gratin*. The water had been well drained away, then the macaroni was mixed with butter and cheese, sprinkled with bread crumbs, and placed in the oven till it had a golden, crisp, and tasty crust. The beef was lean, cut into portions before it was cooked and then served with a sauce that was a real work of art. I had just arrived from Gibraltar, having travelled on board a well-known P. and O. steamer. Here as a saloon passenger I was supposed to enjoy every refinement and luxury. But I am bound to state that on board ship it would have been impossible to obtain as delicate a sauce as that which I tasted at the *cantine scolaire* and which was given to what in England would be described as pauper children. My visit to the Marseilles *cantines scolaires* helps to explain how this has come about, for here the poorest section of the population are taught how to render the refine-

ments of the table accessible to all. Artistic cooking is not a question of money but of good taste, of skill, and of painstaking. It can therefore be applied just as well to a dinner of three courses costing only $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ as to an extravagant banquet. But, then, everyone in France is more or less a cook and takes a genuine and technical interest in the matter. The head-master at the rue Puget school had spent hours in discussing menus with the *cantinière*. Such discussions were not necessary so far as the service was concerned but were pleasant and interesting to both parties. Personally, I raised the question of finance, for $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ seems a very small sum for a full meal. Thereupon the head-master began to dictate what an *ordinaire* for 50 boys would cost. Beef he put down at 24 sous the pound. It is curious that at Marseilles more than at Paris the people still talk of sous. Three kilogrammes would therefore cost 3 francs 60 centimes. Then there might be one kilogramme of Italian pastes, 50 centimes; six kilogrammes of potatoes, 60 centimes; half a litre of oil to bake the potatoes, 50 centimes; salad, 40 centimes; and flavouring ingredients, 25 centimes. This makes a total of 5 francs 85 centimes and would be enough for 50 pupils who at 15 centimes each would pay 7 francs 50 centimes, so there would be a surplus of 1 franc 65 centimes remaining in hand. Yet the 3000 grammes of meat divided by the 50 pupils would give 60 grammes to each person or ten grammes more than the amount stipulated in the by-law. As the meal costs less than $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ there is a large margin for the purchase of a better quality of meat, $6d.$ a pound being a small sum to pay for beef. But then, as explained above, this inferior quality of beef is rendered tender and tasty by the method of cooking.

At the Rue Puget school the 60 boys who remained for their midday meal were, I was informed, for the most part children of shop assistants and small tradesmen. On that day 13 of them were not able to pay for their food and had free tickets from the municipality. The master regretted that a greater number did not dine at school where the meals are better, cheaper, and cleaner than those which the children generally had at home; moreover, he insisted that appetite was contagious and the weakly, delicate children who did not care for their dinner ended by following the example of the more robust and, if only for the sake of getting back to the playground, managed after all to eat their food. This was less likely to be the case if they went home. It was not only a question of feeding the hungry but of enticing those who were not hungry to eat what was necessary for their sustenance.

At the girls' communal school of the Rue St. Saviour there was a meal on the day of my visit that reminded me a little of English extravagance. There were 40 girls and they each had a small, plain, fried beefsteak; there was no sauce, nothing whatsoever to disguise the lack of flavour or the toughness of the meat. Consequently, it being necessary to buy more expensive meat, two and a half kilogrammes of steak at 2 francs per kilogramme had been purchased. This made 5 francs for the 2500 grammes of raw meat which being divided amounted to 62 grammes, or barely

more than two ounces of uncooked steak for each of the 40 pupils. But 40 times 15 centimes only make 6 francs, so there did not remain more than one franc for the rest of the dinner. Evidently too much had been spent on the meat. Two francs a kilogramme is equal to 10*d.* a pound of 500 grammes, whereas the English pound is only equal to 450 grammes; the cost may therefore be translated as equal to 9½*d.* the pound, and steak obtained in England for that price is not likely to be particularly succulent or tender. The really good part of this dinner was the fried potatoes and the salad that accompanied the steaks. But the oil for frying the potatoes doubtless cost 50 centimes and it was the oil that imparted to the potatoes their beautiful golden colour and their crisp, delicate crust. Then the salad must have amounted to another half franc, while the seasoning, the traditional three parts of olive oil to one of white wine vinegar, together with aromatic herbs, must have cost as much again. The potatoes and the salad for the 40 pupils must have necessitated an outlay of at least another 2 francs, so that with the steaks at 5 francs this made 7 francs or more. Thus I conclude that the attempt to give a steak, however small and inferior in quality, meant a deficit of at the very least one franc, or an expenditure of 20 per cent. more than the receipts. Above, however, I have shown how a satisfactory and much more artistically cooked meal can be given for less than 15 centimes a head. Doubtless an occasional change is beneficial, and what is economised on the one meal can be spent on the other. Thus it sometimes comes to pass that the children are given a plain piece of steak but such extravagance is the exception, not the rule.

From THE LANCET, Jan. 19th, 1907.

PARIS. FINAL REPORT.

Mr. Birrell and the Paris School Canteens.—The Respective Attributes of the Caisses des Ecoles and the Cantines Scolaires.—Parents Pay for One-third of the Meals.—But the Meals now Cost on an Average nearly Seven Farthings each, and the Parents who Pay only give on an average Five-and-a-half Farthings per Meal.—The Municipality therefore gives about £5,000 annually to the Parents who Pay.—The Elimination of Charity.—The Work and Budget of the Caisse Scolaires.—Their Contribution to the Canteens Estimated at only Two per Cent. of the Total Cost.—Gradual Increase in the Cost of the Meals and Decrease in the Number of Payments.—Present Tendency to Abolish Payments and render the Meals Free to All.—The Meals Absorb less than a Thirtieth of the Total Cost of Elementary Education.

Two years and a half have elapsed since last I visited and wrote about the free feeding of the children in the elementary schools of Paris.* In the interval Mr. Birrell, as Minister of Education, stated in the House of Commons that the local authority in Paris provided food for the school children and that "it worked exceedingly well. The advantage of such a system," he went on to say, "was that the people raised their own standard of living very much and created in their stomachs a divine satisfaction. They could confer no greater service upon posterity than raising the standard of living of the children. If a child had good and nutritious food he or she would take care to see that in turn their children had good food also. He should be sorry to forbid by law a local authority from trying experiments upon a large scale, whether they were confined to the necessitous poor or not. It is done in Paris, and if it could be done there they in London should be able to do it also. In Paris ten and a half million meals were served last year, and, although it was difficult to ascertain what proportion of them were free, there was reason to believe that a very large proportion of them were given in exchange for payment." Mr. Birrell is not alone in failing to understand clearly the financial position of the Parisian *cantines scolaires*. Indeed, they have been confused with the *caisses des écoles* to such a point as utterly to misrepresent this important institution. What Mr. Birrell himself would consider a very large proportion of payments it is difficult to say, but I will give the actual figures and then it is probable many persons will, on the contrary, find that the proportion of payments is small.

* See First Chapter.

A very instructive "Note relative au Service de Garde des Cantines Scolaires" was presented to the Paris Municipal Council by Councillor Hénaffe and was issued in February, 1907, as paper No. 11 of the official publications of the council. This document sets forth that in 1905 6,144,634 meals were served gratuitously and 3,184,669 in exchange for payments. Thus, at once, it is obvious that only one-third of the meals were paid for by the children or their parents. If, however, the details are studied it becomes evident that the proportion of payment is less. These details are interesting in themselves and apart from the question as to who pays. It will be remembered, as I described in my first report on the subject, that during the earlier experiments made at Paris the cost of the meals amounted to 25 centimes, or $2\frac{1}{2}d.$, each. It was only after the acquirement of great skill and experience in cooking and in the management of the canteens that the cost was reduced to $1\frac{1}{2}d.$, and this on condition that not more than from 20 to 25 grammes of meat, cooked and free from bone, was given. Now, for the year 1905 the average cost of the meals amounted to 0·171 franc each, or within a minute fraction of seven farthings each and a little more than two centimes above the usual estimate of 15 centimes or six farthings. But if the cost exceeded the estimate the payments were below. It is here that the part played by the administration of the *caisses des écoles* bears upon the subject. Paris is divided into 20 submunicipal districts called "arrondissements." Each has its *caisse scolaire*, and where the parents are called upon to pay for their children's meals the charge made by the *caisses scolaires* varies considerably. The maximum payments effected amounted to an average of 18 centimes in the fourth and to 17 centimes in the twelfth arrondissements. In the second, third, seventh, tenth, eighteenth, and twentieth the traditional average of 15 centimes was paid. In the remaining 12 arrondissements the average came to less than 15 centimes. In five districts it amounted to only ten centimes per meal. The average for all the 20 districts, including the fourth, where parents distinguished themselves by paying nine-tenths of a centime more than the actual cost, amounts to 0·138 franc. Thus, even where payment is effected, the sum given is on an average only about five and a half farthings out of the seven farthings spent, and this, I take it, refers to the food actually consumed. In any case the material, the kitchen utensils, the plates, and the rent of the localities occupied are not included in this estimate of the cost of the meals. The total loss on the food consumed in the 20 districts by the children, for whose meals payments have been made by the parents, is put down for the year 1905 at 114,492 francs, or £4579. If to the actual cost of food the other attendant expenses are added, it may be said, speaking in round figures, that two-thirds of the children do not pay for their meals and that the remaining third receive from the public purse an annual subvention of close upon £5000 towards the cost of those meals for which they do effect payments.

M. Pierre Morel, municipal councillor, in his report on the *cantines scolaires* published in 1905, No. 60 of the official publications,

gives the figures for the previous year, and they are very similar. Thus, in 1904, the free meals given amounted to 5,975,359, while those for which payments were made equalled 3,253,919, making a grand total of 9,229,278 meals. If we multiply this latter figure by 0.171 franc, the estimated average cost of each meal, we get the total of 1,578,004 francs, or £60,320. As the municipal subvention amounted to £40,800, it will be seen that here again the parents paid, roughly speaking, about a third of the total cost.

It has been said, however, that the cost of feeding the children was in a measure defrayed by the *caisses des écoles*. Then, as these school funds were originally provided by voluntary contributions, attempts have been made to infer that the feeding of the children in Paris was to a considerable extent the result of charity. Whatever opinion may be held as to what should or should not be done, nothing but mischief can result from a misrepresentation of facts, especially when, as in this case, they refer to the largest experiment that has been made in Europe. As already explained, the law of April 10th, 1867, distinctly states that the *caisses des écoles* will "consist of voluntary subscriptions, of subventions given by the commune, by the department, or by the State." At first voluntary subscriptions did constitute an important part of the receipts, but then the feeding of the children was not attempted. In the official "Note" mentioned above and written by the municipal councillor, M. Hénaffé, there occurs the following important passage:—

If the figures given of the actual working of the *cantines scolaires* are compared, it will be seen that nearly all the *caisses des écoles* charge less for meals than they cost. This fact is explained by the willingness of the town of Paris to pay the difference and the large part it plays in assuring the existence of the *cantines scolaires*. You know that the *caisses des écoles* contribute towards these expenses only an insignificant sum, while the sacrifices made by the town of Paris are enormous, since its share in the expense of the canteens amounts to about 98 per cent. of the total.

This is a statement which may be challenged, not in regard to the principle involved but because certainly in many districts the contribution of the local *caisse des écoles* occasionally amounts to more than 2 per cent. of the cost of the canteen. It is very difficult to make accurate comparisons, as the different districts have different methods of keeping their accounts and charge different prices for the meals they give. A unification of methods is much needed. As an illustration, however, of the objection to the 2 per cent. estimate I find that the *cantines scolaires* of the XIV. arrondissement, or district of the Observatory, cost for the year 1906 the sum of 85,000 francs, and the receipts consisted of a municipal subvention of 80,000 francs and a donation from the *caisse des écoles* of that district of 5000 francs. This latter sum obviously represents a great deal more than 2 per cent. of the total cost of feeding. But, on the other hand, it does not mean that these 5000 francs were derived from charity.

The charitable contribution towards the feeding of the children is much less than 2 per cent. of the whole cost. As the *caisse des*

ecoles of the XIV. arrondissement contributes a comparatively large sum, I will take it as an example of the working of the system. The local budget of this school fund for 1906 shows that the annual subscriptions are estimated at 3500 francs, and there are donations, often from wedding parties, to the amount of 450 francs, making a total of £158.* But the annual subscriptions, generally of 10 francs, or 8s., per subscriber, are given not so much as a charitable financial help—the real object is to secure the right to vote for the election of the committee of management which does so much useful work for the benefit of the school children. Former donations and economies have been invested, and altogether they yield to this local school fund interest to the amount of 3700 francs annually. Then there is a subvention from the general council of the department of the Seine of 2400 francs and other very small items. The greatest of all sources of revenue is 21,000 francs derived from the letting of spaces in the streets to stall-keepers and showmen during local fairs. It has been pointed out that this is injurious to public health, for the streets or open spaces are overcrowded and cannot be kept so clean while these fairs last. Also the stalls injure the business of the neighbouring shop-keepers. The fairs, however, are still held because they amuse some people; but, above all, because the receipts derived therefrom are devoted to the school funds. Thus in the XIV. arrondissement the total receipts from all sources for the school fund amounted in 1906 to 32,160 francs (£1286), of which sum 21,000 francs (£840) were derived from the rent charged to showmen, and there were subventions amounting to another 2650 francs or £106. Deducting from the total receipts of £1286 the £148 interest paid on invested capital as being difficult to define, I will deal with the remaining £1136. Of this £946 come from one form or another of taxation and only £158 from voluntary subscriptions or donations. Smaller receipts, such as £34 paid by parents whose children joined the holiday excursion and the interest on invested capital, make up the total income of 32,160 francs, or £1286.

It will illustrate the working of the system and show what is the real function of these local school funds to mention how this money is spent. The largest item is 8500 francs spent in buying boots for the more needy school children. The money laid out on clothes, to a large extent pinafores, was not so considerable—namely, 5000 francs. In the budget of the XVII. arrondissement, or the Batignolles-Monceaux district, I find that 12,877 francs were spent on boots and only 4931 francs on clothes. Then in the XIV.

* In some, notably the more wealthy, districts, there are no fairs and no income can be obtained from letting ground space to showmen. On the other hand, the donations from wedding parties may be much greater. The only legal wedding is the civil wedding performed by the Mayor or his substitute at the Town Hall or district *Hotel de Ville*. If the parties concerned desire to be married at some special time which they themselves select, the Mayor (each of the 20 arrondissements has its Mayor) usually consents, but intimates that, in consideration for the extra trouble occasioned, he expects that a generous donation will be made to the School Fund, the *Caisse Scolaire* of his *arrondissement*.

arrondissement 2400 francs are entered as rewards to pupils, medals and other gifts, but for the most part these rewards took the form of opening accounts for the children in the savings bank, thus giving an object lesson in thrift. Honorariums to secretaries, &c., amounted to 2100 francs, the prizes given to the children for July 14th historical competition 600 francs, and printing, stationery, and small items brought up the total expenditure to 22,140 francs; thus a balance of 10,020 francs remained in hand. It was out of this balance that 5000 francs were given to the *cantines scolaires*. It will be seen that the bulk of the expenditure is outside of the school fund or *caisse scolaire*. This "outside budget," as it is called in the annual report of the *caisse des écoles*, is set forth as follows: maternal schools for children from three to six years of age, interest on invested money, £4; municipal subvention, £136; total receipts and total expenditure, £140. *Cantines scolaires* receipts: subvention from the municipality, £3200; contribution from the local *caisse des écoles*, £200; total receipts and expenditure for the feeding of the children in the elementary schools of the XIV. arrondissement, £3400. The school colonies or *colonies scolaires*, formed to enable weakly children to spend some time at the seaside or in the country, cost £560, but the municipality only gave a subvention of £360. The deficit of £200 was met by a contribution of that amount from the *caisse des écoles* and taken out of their £400 surplus. This is an illustration of the very general principle that feeding being the first of necessities the municipality gives by far the largest subvention for this purpose. The sending of children for health holidays in the country was left more to local effort and hence, as in this instance, the *caisse des écoles* contributed a much larger share of the expense. In the XVII. arrondissement the municipal subvention during the year 1906 for the holiday health excursions was £400 and the contribution from the local school fund £224. For the canteens the municipal subvention was 60,288 francs (£2411). The payments for meals by the parents amounted to 17,277 francs (£691). The total outlay was 94,501 francs (£3780). There was a very big deficit and the local school fund advanced £651 to balance the accounts. It may be of interest to note that out of this total of £3780 the food cost £2656 and the fuel £199, the rest being spent in furniture, utensils, cost of management, wages to servants, &c.

From the details given of these two local budgets it would seem that the contributions of the local school funds exceed 2 per cent. of the expenditure. Doubtless M. Hénaffé got his figures from the handsome volume published in 1900 on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition by the Paris municipal council describing all the educational services. Here, on page 171, there are some very interesting figures for nine years. From this statement it appears that in 1891 the municipality contributed 639,635 francs to the *cantines scolaires* and the *caisses scolaires* of the 20 arrondissements only gave 7540 francs. In 1894, however, they gave 36,472 francs and the municipality 787,660 francs. From that year the contribution from the school funds to the canteens decreased and that of the municipality

increased till, in 1899, the school funds only gave 21,600 francs, but the municipality gave 1,017,695 francs; and in these latter figures we get the proportion of 2 per cent. mentioned in M. Hénaffe's report. During the nine years in question, 1891 to 1899 inclusive, the total amount contributed by the *caisses des écoles* towards the expenses of the *cantines scolaires* was 192,295 francs (£7691) and by the municipality 7,418,171 francs (£296,726).

On page 176 of the same official volume there is another important table. It compares for each *arrondissement* the number of pupils during the years 1892 and 1898, the number of meals they paid for, the number of meals they received gratuitously, and the average cost per meal. From this it appears that in 1892 the number of gratuitous meals was equal to 56.11 per cent. of the whole and in 1898 it was equal to 63.93 per cent. of the whole. To-day we have seen that it is a full two-thirds of the total. It is also shown that the meals to-day cost more than they used to do, for the average cost in 1892 is set down at 0.14688 franc per meal and 0.14843 franc in 1898, whereas to-day it is 0.171 franc. The tendency is to improve the meals, to give more meat, sometimes as much as 30 to 40 grammes, and thus more money is spent. This improvement will certainly increase as a higher class of children frequent the canteens and the impression gains ground that money can scarcely be better spent than in insuring the physical health and strength of the nation.

All these figures and calculations will, I trust, make the practical teaching of the Paris experience clear. The municipal councillors and others, whom I have recently seen at the Hôtel de Ville, entertain very little doubt as to the likely upshot. It is evident that only a third of the parents pay and then they do not pay the full cost of the meals their children eat. So that all the children and all the parents derive some advantage at the cost of the general ratepayer. When attempts are made to get more voluntary subscriptions for the school funds the persons solicited very often answer that they pay such heavy taxes that there should be no need to add to these any further sum. Not a few of the parents also, when it is pointed out to them that they should endeavour to pay for the meals given to their children at school, object that they are already paying through taxation, and this is perfectly true. Thus the number of those who individually pay for the meals have steadily decreased from year to year and it is already an open question whether the money thus obtained is worth the trouble of collecting. Its collection causes friction, creates invidious distinctions between individuals, gives rise to accusations or the suspicions of favouritism, necessitates somewhat inquisitorial investigations into the private concerns of numerous families to ascertain who should and who should not pay, and occupies a large staff of persons on an unpleasant and unproductive investigation. Then why should a workman who is just a little better off than his neighbour, because, for instance, though earning the same wage he has two children instead of three, be made to pay twice over for his children's meal, once to the *caisse scolaire* of his

district and once to the tax collector? The section of the population that can and does pay for their children's meals are beginning to realize that it would be very much to their advantage if the entire cost was defrayed out of public funds. For instance, the canteens cost rather more than £60,000 a year and a third of the parents pay rather less than a third of this sum directly to the schools but they also pay their share of the £40,800 municipal subvention. It would evidently be cheaper to pay only a slight increase in municipal taxation.

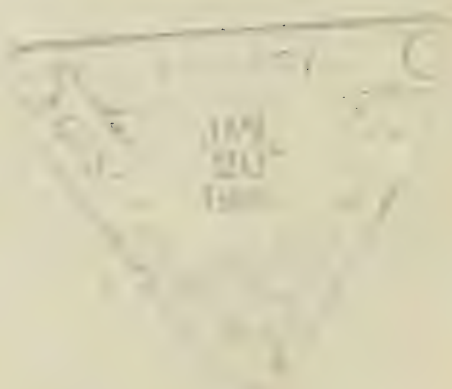
The old argument that the free feeding of the children would weaken parental responsibility has quite died out in France, where every adult male has a vote and all pay the municipal taxes. Parents exercise their sense of responsibility by voting as intelligently as possible in their children's interest. As a consequence, not only is the municipality approved in spending £40,800 on feeding the children, but there is another subsidy of £40,400 which is divided among the maternal schools, the health colonies, various homes for orphans, and different institutions connected with primary education. The teaching itself is, of course, obligatory and gratuitous and all the other services connected with the schools are likely to become equally gratuitous.

Such a tendency in England would doubtless not fail to excite much opposition. It was in 1884 that children attending the Paris elementary schools were first fed on a large scale at the public cost. Paris has therefore had 23 years of practical experience of what has not yet been done anywhere in England. But a law has now been passed. The Provision of Meals Act of 1906 empowers the English school authorities to take some steps in this direction. All the arguments now brought forward in England against the free feeding of children were heard in France a quarter of a century ago. What has become of such arguments in the face of practical experience is shown by the facts and figures given above. Some will be tempted to deplore the result; none can afford to ignore this Paris experience, for it constitutes the greatest object lesson that has ever been given on the subject. The Paris experiment is not as radical as that attempted by the municipality of Vercelli where, as already described, every child is compelled to take his midday lunch at school and no parent is allowed to pay, but then Vercelli is quite a small place, while Paris is the second largest town in Europe. In 1905 there were in Paris 202 public schools for boys and 202 public schools for girls. The number of pupils inscribed were 79,698 boys and 74,124 girls. Of these 24,023 boys and 14,157 girls attended school during the holidays, where they were watched and fed but not taught. The allowing of children to play in the school buildings instead of the streets during the holiday is an excellent measure to keep them out of mischief and to insure their being properly fed. Altogether the town of Paris spends on primary education about £1,280,000 and the feeding of the children does not amount to one-thirtieth of the entire outlay. The cost is therefore in no wise to be compared with the importance of the service. The benefits to public health and to the

growing intelligence of the pupils are generally recognised to be out of all proportion compared with the expenditure; no outlay has ever given better results.

Of course the feeding is but part—doubtless the most important and expensive part—of a whole system of physical education. One advantage of the meal at school is that when the attending school physician prescribes a special diet or certain medicaments with the meal the pupil gets them. At home such medical instructions would not always be as punctually executed. Then the great harm done by calisthenics when imposed on starving school children is avoided, because in the Paris schools the children cannot starve. Finally, when consumption and other diseases may be avoided by sending the child to the country or seaside this can often be done as there is a large municipal subvention for that purpose. If we compare the completeness of all these measures, the care with which they have been combined to supplement each other, with the comparative chaos that prevails in the English elementary schools, it is not surprising to find that so much more is said about physical degeneration on the British than on the French side of the Channel.

From THE LANCET, April 13th, 1907.



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